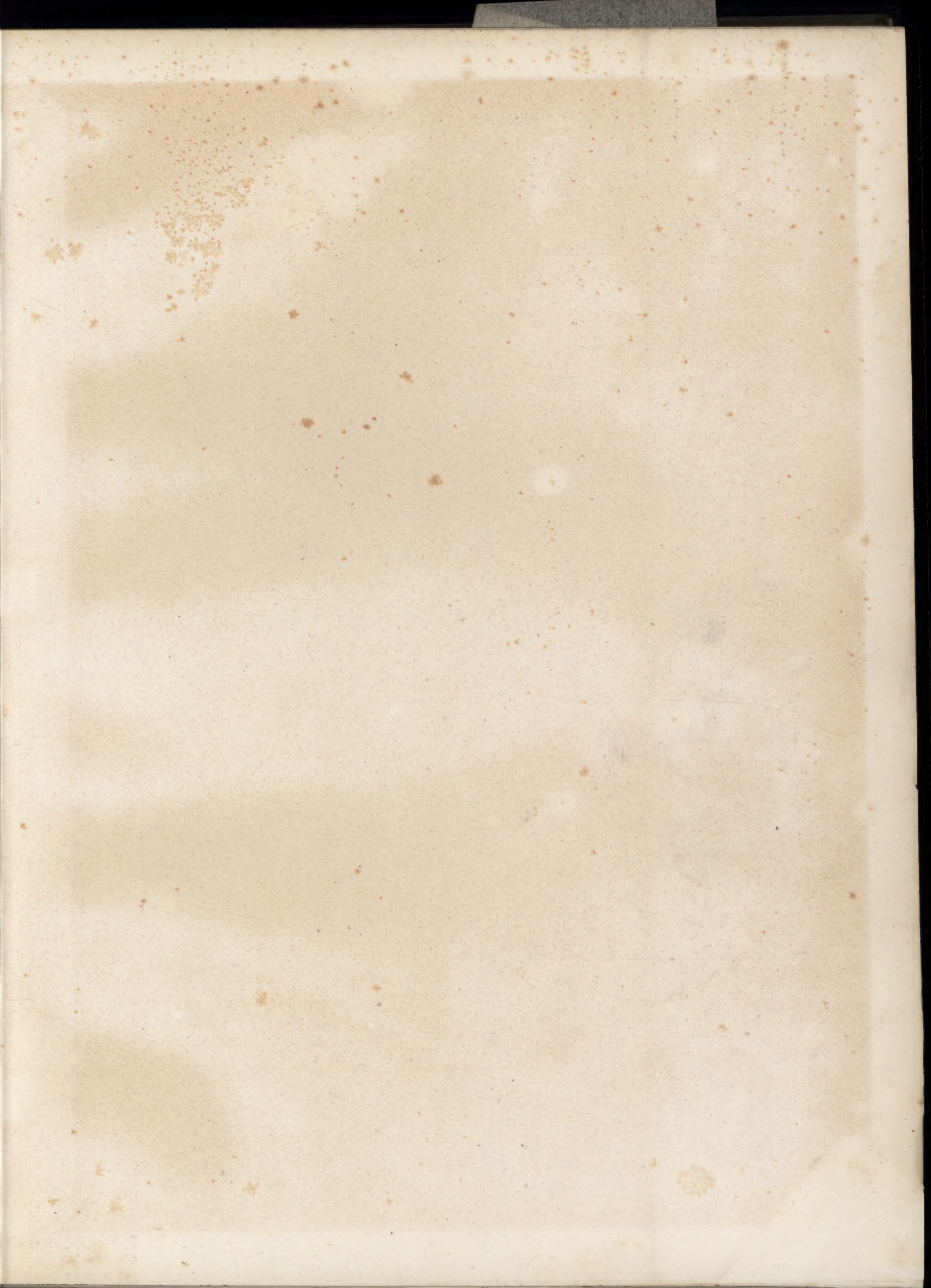


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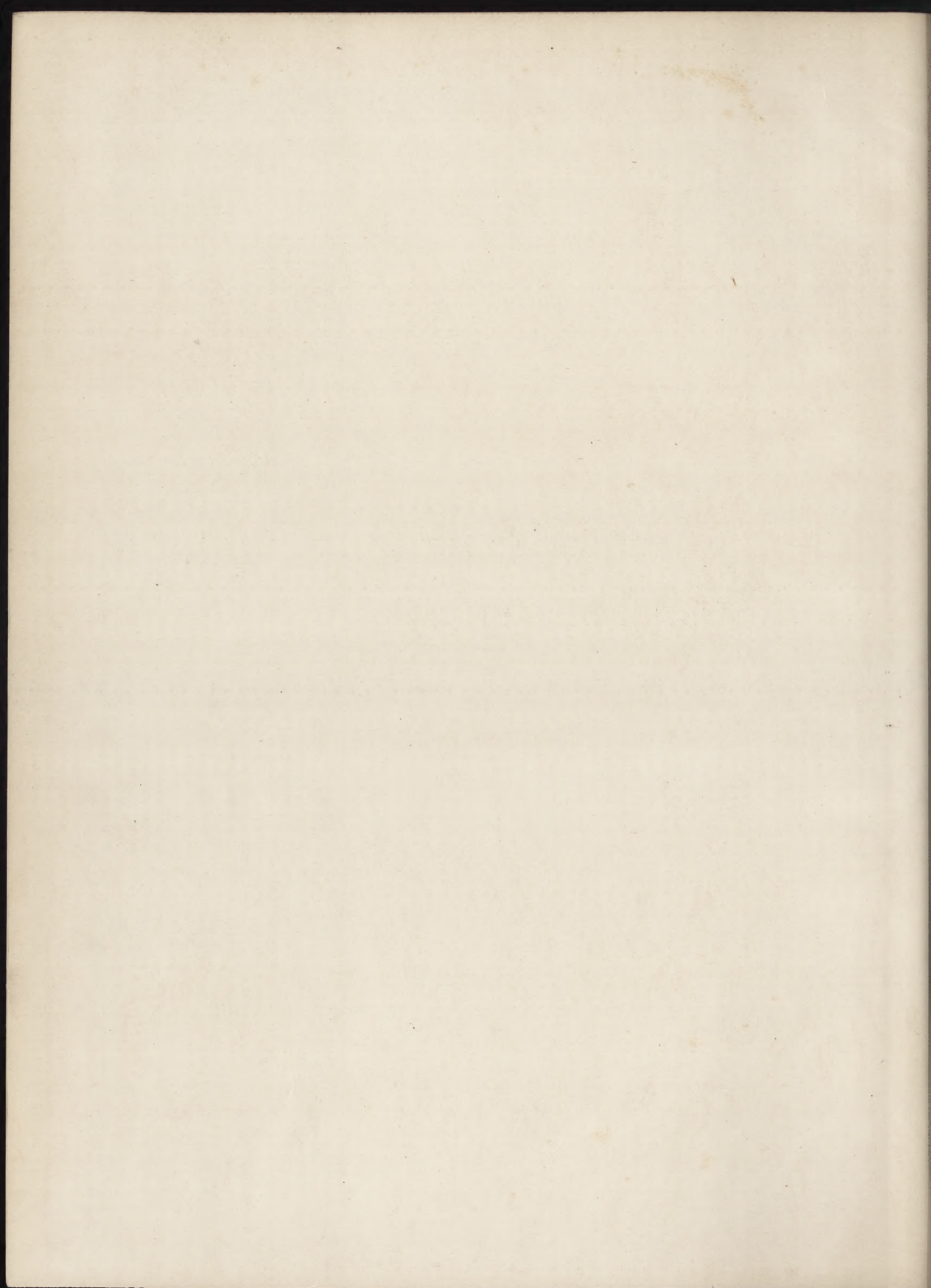
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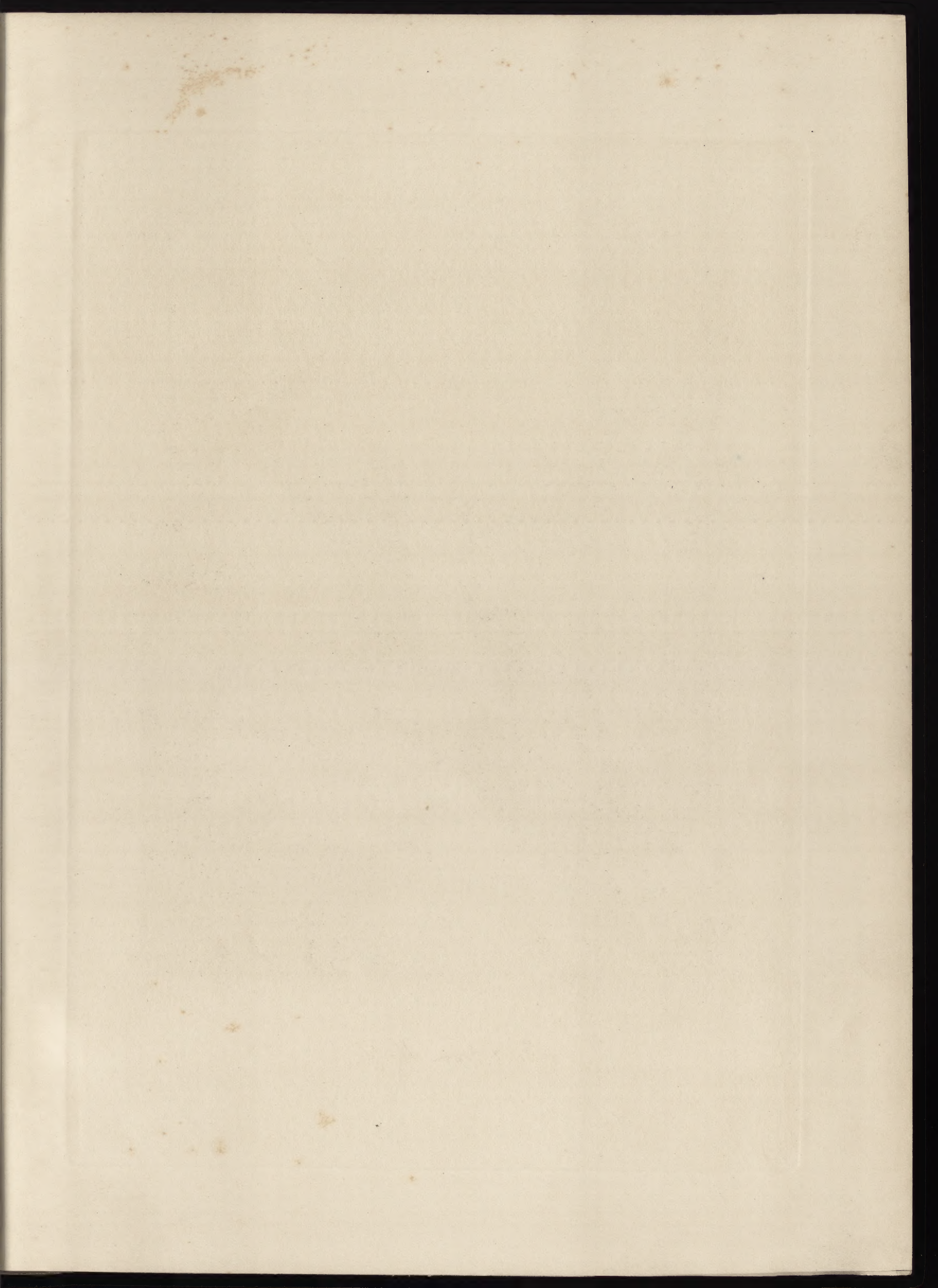
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THE LIFE AND ART
OF
SANDRO BOTTICELLI







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Engraved by J. J. Waddington, Ld.

The Chigi Madonna.

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THE LIFE AND ART
OF
SANDRO BOTTICELLI

BY
JULIA CARTWRIGHT
(MRS. ADY)

AUTHOR OF "ISABELLA D'ESTE," "BEATRICE D'ESTE," "RAPHAEL,"
"THE PAINTERS OF FLORENCE," ETC.

"A good painter has two chief objects to paint, man and the intention of his soul. The former is easy, the latter hard."—*Leonardo da Vinci*.

"Good painting is a music and melody which intellect only can appreciate and that with difficulty. This painting is so rare that few are capable of attaining to it."—*Michelangelo*.

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PREFACE

THE present volume is an expanded form of a smaller sketch which was kindly received by the public last autumn. On larger lines and with greater fullness of detail, I have here tried to give some account of Sandro Botticelli, both as the painter and the man; of his relations with the Medici and the Florentine humanists on the one hand, and of his connection with Savonarola and the Piagnone revival on the other. At the same time I have endeavoured to follow the course of his artistic training and development, and to enumerate and describe the works which, in the opinion of the best critics, may be attributed to this master with certainty. Although of late years much study has been devoted to Botticelli and his art, our knowledge of the great artist's history remains scanty and limited, and no complete record of his life can be given. But his personality and his works are both of them so attractive, and the interest which he inspires at the present time is so deep, that this study, incomplete and fragmentary as it necessarily is, may be acceptable to those who wish to gain a clearer knowledge of one of the most remarkable painters of the Florentine Renaissance.

My obligations to former writers are many and great. For a full list of the historians and critics whose works have been consulted, the reader must be referred to the Bibliography at the close of the volume. But I wish especially to offer my sincere thanks to Mr. Berenson and Mr. Herbert Horne, the chief recent authorities on the life and works of Botticelli; and to M. Jacques Mesnil, Signor Poggi, and Herr Brockhaus, for the fresh light which their researches have thrown on

PREFACE

the painter's career. In common with every student of Botticelli's art, I am deeply indebted to Dr. Steinmann for his learned analysis of the frescoes in the Sixtine Chapel; as well as to the late Dr. Lippmann and Dr. Strzygowski, for their valuable commentaries on the Dante drawings in the Berlin Museum and the Vatican. And I further wish to express my gratitude to Professor Villari for his admirable works on Savonarola, the great Dominican friar with whom our painter was closely connected in his later years, and more especially for his kind permission to quote some extracts from the Chronicle, recently published by him, written by Sandro's brother, Simone dei Filipepi.

JULIA CARTWRIGHT.

ROSENLAUI,
August 24th, 1904

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The Chigi Madonna is reproduced here as a frontispiece by permission of Messrs. P. and D. Colnaghi.

The scene from the tale of "Nastagio degli Onesti" is reproduced from a photograph belonging to Mr. J. Caswall-Smith, by permission of the "Burlington Magazine."

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THE LIFE AND ART OF SANDRO BOTTICELLI

CHAPTER I

Sandro Botticelli and his Art.—His popularity in the Present Age.—Ruskin reveals him to Englishmen.—Pater's appreciation.—The Pre-Raphaelites.—The scientific art-critics.—Morelli and Berenson.—Recent writers on the subject.—Personality of the Artist.—Florence in the age of the Medici.—Her importance as a centre of art.—Vasari's reasons for her artistic supremacy in the fifteenth century.

A LESSANDRO DEI FILIPEPI, or Sandro Botticelli, as the artist was familiarly termed by his friends and contemporaries, is one of the most interesting and attractive among the Florentine masters of the Renaissance. His art, as we all know, has had a singular fascination for the critics and scholars of the nineteenth century. The strong individuality of his conceptions, the power and originality of his thought, and the mystic tendency of his genius, as well as his fine poetic imagination and keen sense of beauty, appeal in a peculiar manner to the modern mind, and have made him as popular in the present day as he was during his own lifetime. On the one hand, Botticelli's poetic charm, his profound religious feeling and strong human sympathy were a favourite theme with the great thinkers of the last generation who first opened our eyes to the glories of the Early Italian Renaissance. On the other, his mastery of design, the grace of his line and charm of his colour have won the praise of those experts who have brought the more scientific methods of the new criticism to bear upon these questions. Thus both schools of modern art-criticism agree in their admiration of this Florentine master, whose rare merit had been practically forgotten for nearly four hundred years after his death.

First among the leaders of thought to whom this revival of interest in Botticelli's art is due, was Ruskin. Of late years it has become the

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fashion to disparage Ruskin's services to art, and to scoff at the inconsistency and errors of the criticism which he devoted to Italian painters. But whatever his defects may have been in this respect, the great advance both in knowledge and connoisseurship which has been made during the last thirty years, is largely the result of this one man's clear-sighted vision and untiring efforts. Ruskin certainly possessed in a supreme degree the faculty of discerning at a glance those beauties which others take many years to recognize, or would never discover for themselves. Many of us have felt as Charlotte Brontë wrote after reading "Modern Painters," that we had been "walking blindfold" until Ruskin first opened our eyes to the wonders of Art and Nature. He it was who first saw the beauties of Botticelli's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel when most critics had only eyes for Michelangelo, and who told the world the meaning of Sandro's *Judith* and *Fortezza*. He it was who, on his return from Florence in 1845, wrote to the "Times" urging the trustees of the National Gallery to buy the works—not of Guido and Rubens—but of the old Florentine masters, Giotto and Angelico and Botticelli. And he it was once more who, in 1872, first taught the Oxford undergraduates how to study Sandro's art, in those lectures which were afterwards so widely read in the volume bearing the title of "Ariadne Florentina." "I say with pride," he wrote in his epilogue to the second volume of "Modern Painters," "that it was left to me and to me alone, first to discern and then to teach, so far as in this hurried century any such thing can be taught, the excellency and supremacy of five great painters, despised until I spoke of them—Turner, Tintoret, Luini, Botticelli and Carpaccio. Despised—nay, scarcely in any true sense of the word known."

The English pre-Raphaelite painters quickly caught the fire of Ruskin's enthusiasm. Both Dante Rossetti and Burne-Jones turned with instinctive sympathy to the primitive master in whose art they found an intensity of expression and mystic feeling closely akin to their own. They bought pictures which, if they were not painted by him, at least bore the stamp of his powerful individuality, and studied every detail of his works with a reverence that was almost worship. So, by slow degrees, the movement spread, and in the early seventies a new passion for this long-forgotten master sprang up in cultured circles.

APPRECIATIONS

Pictures by Botticelli and his followers were brought to light, and appeared at Winter Exhibitions on the walls of Burlington House. Travellers brought back photographs and copies of his masterpieces, and began to write and talk of Botticelli on their own account. "People have begun to find out the charm of Botticelli's work," wrote Pater in the "Fortnightly Review," "and his name, little known in the last century, is quietly becoming important." Next to Ruskin's writings, nothing helped to produce this happy result more than the eloquent appreciation of Botticelli from the pen of the last-named writer, which, indeed, appeared as early as 1870, and attracted general attention at the time. The peculiar charm of the painter's art, the spirit which animates his quaint versions of Greek myths and his mournful Madonnas, has never been described in truer or more exquisite language than in the chapter devoted to Botticelli in Pater's "Studies of the Renaissance." But in this very essay, we find a curious mark of the ignorance on these subjects that still prevailed even in Oxford circles. The accomplished author, it appears, was not aware of the existence of Botticelli's drawings of the "Divina Commedia" in the Duke of Hamilton's possession, and in speaking of the engravings in Landino's edition of Dante, lamented that the painter had only illustrated the poet's "Inferno," and had never turned his attention to the "Purgatorio" or "Paradiso."

A host of English and foreign writers now approached the subject on different sides. John Addington Symonds described the Madonna of the Magnificat in the Uffizi, in a well-known passage of his great work on the Italian Renaissance. Vernon Lee wrote a graceful account of the newly-discovered frescoes of Villa Lemmi. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, and Eugène Müntz, the French historian of the Renaissance, studied Botticelli's art carefully, and drew up lists of his works. German scholars discussed the motives of his paintings, and wrangled over the meaning of his *Primavera* and *Venus*. Then Morelli took up his pen, and a new era opened in the history of art-criticism. He boldly attacked the mass of confusion and error which had arisen from the blind acceptance of traditional attributions, laid down definite rules by which the hand of individual artists could be recognized, and pointed to the study of original drawings as the surest way of acquiring certain knowledge of a painter's style and of the school in which he was trained.

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Since then the able critics who followed in his steps have devoted much attention to the art of Botticelli with admirable results. Mr. Berenson has praised him as the greatest artist of lineal design that Europe has ever had,¹ and Mr. Herbert Horne has given us precious fragments of the great work on which he has already spent many years of labour, but for which we still wait.

The personality of Botticelli is no less interesting than his art. Incomplete and fragmentary as our knowledge of his life and character still remains, we know enough to realize the vigour and originality of his mind, and the profound impression which the man left upon his contemporaries. In an age that was in a remarkable manner productive of great personalities, when Lorenzo dei Medici and Savonarola, Poliziano and Pico della Mirandola, Leonardo and Michelangelo were all living, Sandro Botticelli stands out pre-eminently among the men of his generation by the greatness of his creations and the might of his enthusiasms. In him we have above all a typical Florentine artist, who gave expression to the life and thought of his fellow-citizens more fully than any contemporary painter. The other great masters who flourished at the close of the fifteenth century were soon drawn away from their native city. Leonardo da Vinci spent the best years of his life at Milan, and went to die at the court of Francis I; Michelangelo belongs more to Rome than he does to Florence, and his most famous paintings are to be found in the Sistine Chapel. But Sandro spent almost the whole of his life in the city of his birth, and is closely associated with her most glorious days.

Born in the time of Cosimo dei Medici, the illustrious citizen who raised the fortunes of his family and country to so high a pitch and acquired the title of *Pater patriae*, Botticelli lived to become the favourite painter of Cosimo's still more illustrious grandson, Lorenzo il Magnifico, and was employed by him to record the triumph of his house and the ruin of his foes on the walls of Florence. An intimate friend and companion of the humanists whom Lorenzo delighted to honour, Sandro painted the classical myths of the Greek world with which they were enamoured, as it appeared in their eyes. His Venus and Pallas, his Mercury and Flora, his nymphs and cupids were inspired by their

¹ "The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance," by Bernhard Berenson, p. 75.

THE MEDICEAN AGE

verses. His lovely visions of the *Primavera* and the *Birth of Venus* owe their origin to the poems of Angelo Poliziano; each detail in the allegorical subjects which he painted in honour of Lorenzo Tornabuoni's wedding was supplied by Marsilio Ficino or some leading humanist of the Medici circle. The enthusiasm of these Florentine Platonists for antiquity, their love of natural beauty, even their revived interest in Dante's "Divina Commedia," are all reflected in Botticelli's works. The same deep-rooted idealism which made Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino seek to reconcile the doctrine of Plato with the Christian faith, moved Sandro to paint those Madonnas in which the tenderest human affection and the purest religious feeling are combined with the highest decorative beauty. And this same mystic tendency led Botticelli to listen with passionate attention to the great Dominican preacher whose voice had so strange an attraction for the humanists of Lorenzo's circle, and made him devote the art of his latter days to the cause of Christ and the Frate.

Thus Botticelli stands out in an especial manner as the representative of the Medicean age. The range of his art is as wide as the culture of the Renaissance itself, and the political movements which divided Florence during his lifetime, the struggle between the Medici and the Pazzi, the bitter strife of Arrabbiati and Piagnoni, are as fully reflected in his work as the different currents of thought, the ideals and aspirations of the scholars and poets of his day. That day was a memorable one for Florence, and Giovanni Rucellai, we can well believe, expressed the feelings of many of his fellow-countrymen when he gave thanks to God that he was a native of the most illustrious city in the world, and lived in the time of the Magnificent Lorenzo. Since the days of Giotto and Dante, Florence had become the centre of the new culture, the starting-point of all literary and artistic endeavour. After the suppression of the Ciompi rebellion and the final conquest of Pisa in 1406, the Republic entered on a prolonged period of peace and prosperity. The wealth of her merchants increased rapidly, her commerce spread to foreign lands and distant cities. Not only in Genoa and Milan, but in Lyons and Bruges, the Portinari and other great patricians of Florence opened their houses and carried on a flourishing trade. At the same time, the decline of Milan and of the power of the Visconti princes gave Florence

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an opportunity to acquire a political supremacy of which Cosimo dei Medici, as chief magistrate, was not slow to avail himself. Thus the first half of the fifteenth century witnessed an extensive development of civic life, which was followed by a similar advance in learning and a splendid blossoming of the fine arts. The chiefs of rival factions, whether Medici or Albizzi, alike devoted their gold and influence to the encouragement of art and letters, and new churches and palaces arose on the banks of the Arno. Then Brunellesco modelled the majestic Dome which is still without a rival in the world, and Ghiberti moulded the bas-reliefs of the famous Baptistery gates. Then Donatello carved the marble saints which guard the walls of Or' San Michele, and in the dim aisles of the Carmine church young Masaccio painted those frescoes that were to be the model of future generations of painters in the years to come.

Florence now became a centre to which all eyes were turned throughout Italy. Foreign princes, the art-loving Dukes of Milan and Urbino, Francesco Sforza and his sons, invited Florentine architects and painters to build their churches and decorate their palaces; and artists from North Italy and Umbria, Gentile da Fabriano and Jacopo Bellini, Piero dei Franceschi and Luca Signorelli, came to Florence in search of the training which they could not find elsewhere. When young Pietro Perugino had learnt all that his Umbrian master could teach him, that same master, Vasari tells us, bade him go to Florence, since there, above all other places, men rise to perfection in all the arts, but most especially in painting.

"This," the Aretine biographer continues, "arises from three causes which in that city incite artists to earnest endeavour. In the first place, criticism is freely expressed on all sides and on all subjects, because the air of Florence makes the intellects of men naturally independent, and not content with mediocrity, but ever careful to recognize the good and beautiful in works of art, without respect to the author. Secondly, in order to earn a living in Florence, it is necessary for a man to be industrious, that is to say, he must constantly use his mind and judgement and be quick and sharp in all that he does, and know how to make money, since Florence, not having a naturally rich and fertile territory, cannot supply the means of living at a small cost.

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In the third place, this air inspires men of all professions with a great desire to gain glory and honour, so that no man of spirit is willing to be left behind, or to be conquered in the struggle by those who are his equals, but all alike strive to obtain the mastery."

Whether there was any truth in the words which Vasari puts into the mouth of the Umbrian painter who sent Perugino to seek his fortunes in Florence, whether, like the Athenians of old, her citizens owed their fine intellect and natural independence to the pure, keen air of the Apennines which surround her walls, it is certain that in the fifteenth century she enjoyed undisputed supremacy in art and letters among the cities of Italy. It was in these golden days, when the Medici were at the height of their power, and Florence was the home of the foremost scholars and artists of the age, that Sandro Botticelli first saw the light in his father's house on the banks of Arno.

CHAPTER II

1444—1467

Birth and family of the painter.—The surname of Botticelli.—Early training under Fra Filippo Lippi.—The Carmelite painter, his style and genius.—Frescoes of the lives of St. John the Baptist and St. Stephen in the choir of the Pieve.—Similarity of Botticelli's style to that of Fra Filippo.—Motives derived from the Friar's work.—Fra Filippo goes to Spoleto.—Sandro returns to Florence.—Botticelli's first Madonna.

A LESSANDRO, "called after our custom Sandro," says Vasari, "and further surnamed *di Botticelli*, for a reason that shall be afterwards explained," was the fourth son and youngest child of a prosperous tanner, Mariano di Vanni dei Filipepi. In those days there were extensive tanneries along the banks of the Mugnone, a stream on the outskirts of the city of Florence, which M. Müntz compares with the Bièvre of modern Paris. Mariano was probably the proprietor of one of these tanneries, but he lived with his large family of children and grandchildren in a house of the Via Nuova, now the Via della Porcellana, in the Borgo Ognissanti, close to the church of Santa Lucia. M. Mesnil, who has lately made fresh researches on the subject, tells us that the tanner's house stood on the site occupied by the present house, No. 28; close to the cemetery of Ognissanti.¹ Mariano seems to have been in comfortable circumstances, and owned land at Peretola, a village near the Porta al Prato, which brought him a substantial income. All his four sons were brought up to some trade. The eldest, Giovanni, born in 1420, followed his father's profession and was a leather merchant who acquired the nickname of "*Il Botticello*" (Little Barrel) either from the cask which was the sign of his shop, or from his own corpulent figure. The second, Antonio, born in 1429, was apprenticed to a goldsmith and traded in that capacity first in Florence and afterwards at Bologna, where he also sold books. The third, Simone, was born in 1443, and went to Naples at the age of fourteen, in the service of the wealthy

¹ "Miscellanea d'Arte," 1903, p. 87.

EARLY YEARS

Florentine banker, Paolo Rucellai. Sandro, the fourth brother, was formerly supposed to have been born late in 1446, or early in 1447, from the income-tax return made in 1480 by his father, who there describes him as being thirty-three years of age.¹ But these *Catasti*, or registers, which afford us so much valuable information regarding Florentine artists, are often inaccurate, and in Sandro's case the different statements as to his age certainly do not agree with each other. A few years ago Mr. Herbert Horne discovered an earlier income-tax return, made in February 1458 (O. S. 1457), in which Sandro is described as being thirteen years of age and as still going to school, on account of his delicate health.² As a rule the records kept in a boy's early days, when he was still living under his father's roof, are found to be the most accurate, and it is in after years, when the members of the family are grown up and scattered, that these small discrepancies creep in. In this case we may conclude that Sandro was born in 1444, and was therefore only a year younger than his brother Simone, with whom he became closely associated in the latter part of his career. This discovery has been confirmed by M. Mesnil, who, within the last year, has published a still earlier entry in the register, a return made by Mariano on the 1st of March, 1446, in which he states that his son Sandro is two years of age.³ M. Mesnil, however, doubts the accuracy of Mr. Horne's reading of the entry made in February, 1457. The actual words are: "*Sandro mio figliolo detto, d'anni 13: sta al legare ed e malsano.*" Possibly, as M. Mesnil suggests, the words "*sta al legare*," which Mr. Horne interprets as "going to school," may refer to the goldsmith's trade, or to the binding of books, which Sandro's brother Antonio sold. But in those days of early apprenticeships, it is hardly likely that a boy of thirteen was still going to school.

Be this as it may, Vasari tells us that Sandro took no pleasure in reading, writing, or figures, and was always discontented, until his father, in despair at the boy's strange habits, apprenticed him to a goldsmith named *Botticello*, who was a very competent master of his art. No goldsmith of that name, however, appears to have been living

¹ Gaye's "Carteggio," vol. i, p. 344. Comp. "Chronique des Arts," 1899, p. 312. E. Müntz.

² "Revue Archéologique," vol. xxxix, p. 12.

³ "Miscellanea d'Arte," p. 87 *sqq.*

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in Florence; and the surname of Botticelli, by which Sandro has become known to posterity, was evidently acquired from his elder brother Giovanni. The painter does not seem to have used the name himself, as far as we can tell from the only two works which bear his signature. On the panel of the *Nativity* of 1500, now in the National Gallery, he writes: "This picture I, Alessandro, painted," and in the drawing of the twenty-eighth canto of "Paradiso," on the tablet borne by one of the angels in the choirs of heaven, we read the words: "Sandro di Mariano." In his income-tax return of 1498, he signs the paper with his full name, "Alessandro di Mariano dei Filipepi,"¹ and in the contract for the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel in October, 1481, he is described as "Alessandro Mariani de Florencia."² On the other hand, his surname of Botticelli is always used in the Florentine contracts of the period. This is the case both in the commission which he received from the Signora in 1478, to paint the effigies of the Pazzi conspirators on the walls of the Palazzo Pubblico; and again in 1491, when, shortly before Lorenzo dei Medici's death, he and a few other distinguished artists were appointed to choose a design for the façade of the Duomo. Again, in two entries of the year 1485, which were lately discovered by Signor Supino in the archives of the Guicciardini family, we find the painter of the altar-piece in San Spirito described as "Sandro del Botticello." This was evidently the name commonly used by his comrades. Leonardo da Vinci speaks of him in his "Trattato della Pittura" as "our Botticello," and Michelangelo, who was thirty years younger than Sandro, sent him a letter in 1496, addressed to "Sandro Botticelli, painter in Florence." Antonio Billi, the Florentine chronicler, who wrote early in the sixteenth century, probably while Sandro was still alive, describes him as Sandro di Botticello; and the Anonimo of the "Codex Gaddiano," who compiled his account of the artist a few years later, gives his full name as "Sandro di Mariano, di Vanni dei Filipepi, called Sandro di Botticelli."

It is of course very probable that Sandro worked for a year or two in the shop of his brother, the goldsmith Antonio, but before long he succeeded in convincing old Mariano that painting was his true

¹ Gaye's "Carteggio," vol. i, p. 344.

² D. Gnoli in "Archivio dell' Arte," 1893, vol. vi, p. 128.

FRA FILIPPO

vocation. "There was at that time," writes Vasari, "much familiarity (*domestichezza*) and an almost constant intercourse between the goldsmiths and the painters; and before long Sandro, who was endowed with considerable skill, and applied his whole mind to drawing, became enamoured of painting, and determined to devote himself to this art. He now opened his heart freely to his father, who, seeing his inclination and knowing the strength of his will, took him to Fra Filippo of the Carmine, a most excellent painter of that time, and placed him with him to learn painting, as Sandro himself desired." The old tanner's choice could not have fallen on a more gifted painter or a teacher more calculated to appreciate and encourage his son's budding genius. Filippo Lippi, the Carmelite friar whose life and character have been drawn for us so vividly both by Vasari and Browning, was then at the height of his renown. The genial, pleasure-loving man, a painter by vocation and a monk by accident, had long ago turned his back on the cloister which suited him so ill, and stood high in the favour of Cosimo dei Medici and his sons. His fame had spread beyond the walls of Florence, and Filarete, the Tuscan architect in the service of the Duke of Milan, mentions him in his "Treatise on Architecture" as one of the few artists who could be trusted to decorate a prince's palace.

Fra Filippo's inborn love of all bright and pleasant things, his taste for rich brocades and splendid architecture, the natural delight which he took in the flowers and the sunshine, in lovely women-faces and rosy-cheeked babies, the glowing light and colour in which he bathes his pictures, fitted him in an especial manner to be the herald of that fuller and larger life which was dawning on the men and women of his age. A realist at heart, he painted the curly-headed boys whom he met in the streets of Florence as angels, filled the courts of heaven with fair maidens in sumptuous attire, and took his own mistress as a model for the Madonna. There was no pretence at religious feeling or devotional fervour in his art; he was frankly in love with all the good things of life, and asked for nothing better than to enjoy these to the full:

The world's no blot for us
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good;
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.

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But his naturalism differed wholly from that of his more scientific contemporaries, Paolo Uccello or Andrea del Castagno. From his first masters, Lorenzo Monaco and Masolino, he learnt the old traditions of fourteenth-century art and acquired his rare skill in handling colour and glazes. He never troubled his head with problems of form or perspective or anxious inquiries as to the latest technical methods. The old tempera painting was good enough for him, and it must be owned that he carried it to the highest pitch of perfection. But at the same time he learnt much from Masaccio, whom he must often have seen at work in the Brancacci Chapel of the Carmelite Church; and after the death of this short-lived master, Vasari writes: "People said that Masaccio's spirit had entered into the body of Fra Filippo." He certainly profited greatly by the advance which Masaccio and his followers had effected, and in his larger and more important works, such as the scenes from the Baptist and St. Stephen at Prato, we see how closely he imitates the composition and grouping of the Carmine frescoes. Yet all his work is marked by the same individuality of type and feeling, and the soft charm and gaiety of his colour, as well as the strong human element that is everywhere present in his art, explains the widespread popularity which he acquired during his lifetime.

Such was the master to whom Sandro was apprenticed in 1459 or 1460, when he was about fifteen years old, and from whom he received his first regular training. It has been supposed by some critics, who detect a resemblance between the tall, slender types of Pesellino's figures and those afterwards adopted by Botticelli, that Sandro learnt of this master. But although Pesellino worked for many years as Fra Filippo's assistant, and was, next to Botticelli himself, the Carmelite painter's ablest and most successful scholar, he can never have been his teacher, since he died in 1457, at which time, as we have already seen, Sandro had not yet entered the friar's *bottega*. From the moment that the boy was allowed to follow his own bent, his powers developed rapidly. "He devoted himself entirely," writes Vasari, "to the study of the art which he had chosen, and followed the instruction and imitated the manner of his master so closely, that Fra Filippo soon loved him dearly, and took so much pains in teaching him that Sandro quickly reached a degree of excellence far beyond all expectation."

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Since the year 1452 Fra Filippo had been engaged to decorate the choir of the Pieve or Collegiate Church at Prato, but his work there was repeatedly interrupted by other commissions, as well as by his notorious intrigue with the young nun, Lucrezia Buti. This orphan girl of nineteen had been placed in a convent at Prato at an early age by her brother, and is said to have sat to the friar as a model for the beautiful Pitti Madonna, soon after he first began work in the Pieve choir. The painter, although already over fifty, promptly fell in love with his fair model, and on the festival of the Holy Girdle in May, 1456, he carried off Lucrezia to his house, where, in the following year, she gave birth to a son, who afterwards became the artist, Filippino Lippi. Eventually Fra Filippo's powerful friend, Cosimo dei Medici, interceded with Pope Pius II on behalf of the guilty pair, and in 1461, a papal bull was issued releasing them from their monastic vows and declaring them to be lawful man and wife. But it was not till early in 1464 that Fra Filippo resumed his long neglected work in the Pieve, at the urgent entreaty of the newly-appointed Provost, Cosimo's illegitimate son Carlo. By this time Sandro had been several years in the Friar's workshop and had already given proofs of his powers. He was no doubt able to render his master efficient service in the series of frescoes which Lippi painted on the choir walls of the Collegiate Church. The subject assigned to the artist had been the history of St. John the Baptist and of St. Stephen, and since Fra Filippo had already devoted many months to the task, we may conclude that he was now engaged on the two last frescoes of the series. One of these was the *Feast of Herodias*, with Salome dancing before King Herod and the assembled guests on one side, and on the other, kneeling before her mother, and offering her the head of the Baptist on a charger. The other, painted on the opposite wall of the choir, was the *Stoning and Burial of St. Stephen*, the first Christian martyr. It is just in these last subjects that we trace the strongest resemblance to Botticelli's future creations. In the light and graceful steps of the girl Salome, as she dances before King Herod and his guests in the spacious hall, in her swaying form and fluttering scarf, in the long throats and clinging draperies of Herodias and her maidens, in the expression of wistful sadness on the faces of the spectators, we recognize many of those motives which

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belong peculiarly to Botticelli and his school. Again, in the patriarchal figures of the venerable Evangelists which adorn the vaulted roof, we notice a marked likeness to the bearded saints and bishops of Sandro's altar-pieces, while in the yearning faces of the mournful disciples gazing in love and sorrow at the dead body of Stephen there is a depth and intensity of expression which seems to foreshadow the scholar's art. Sandro indeed may have had an important share in these frescoes, and it remains a question how much of his style was derived from Fra Filippo or what portion of these admirable paintings was his work. But the more carefully we study the altar-pieces and smaller panels of the Carmelite friar, the more we realize how closely Sandro formed his style on his master's pattern. In the different attitudes and movements of his figures, in the details of their dress and ornament, in the gauzy, transparent draperies and dainty headgear of his Madonnas and nymphs, we are constantly reminded of Fra Filippo's work. The pen-drawings of the two masters show a still more remarkable similarity, and, as Mr. Berenson has lately pointed out,¹ we have a prototype of Botticelli's achievements in this line, in the admirable pen-and-ink sketch by Fra Filippo of a Madonna kneeling between St. Michael and St. Bernard in adoration of the Child, which is preserved in the archives of Florence. This sketch belongs to a letter addressed by the master to Giovanni dei Medici, who had ordered him to paint a Madonna which he might present to Alfonso, King of Naples, in the year 1457, and is one of the very few drawings still in existence by this artist. "Fra Filippo," Vasari tells us, "drew exceedingly well, as may be seen from our book of drawings by the most famous painters, which contains, amongst others, several studies for his Santo Spirito altar-piece in the chapel of Prato." Unfortunately, hardly any of these sketches have been preserved, and the Uffizi does not contain a single specimen by the Frate's hand.

The series of frescoes in the choir of the Pieve, upon which Fra Filippo had been engaged at intervals during the last thirteen years, was at length completed in 1465, but the painter remained at Prato during the next two years to recruit himself after his arduous labours, and to execute various private commissions which he had undertaken. The most important of these was an altar-piece of the Presentation for the

¹ "The Drawings of Florentine Painters," by Bernhard Berenson, vol. i, p. 51.

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Servi Fathers, which he only finished in the spring of 1467. Immediately after this he set out for Spoleto, taking with him his little son, Filippino, and his chief assistant, Fra Diamante, to paint the choir of the Cathedral, at the invitation of the magistrates of that city. Sandro did not accompany his master on this last journey. But the choirs of angels, singing and dancing on the meadows of Paradise, swinging censers in the air, or scattering roses at the feet of the blessed, which form so prominent a feature of Fra Filippo's *Coronation of the Virgin* in the cupola of the Spoleto Duomo, bear a striking resemblance to Botticelli's own creations and seem to indicate that he had a share in this latest phase of his master's art. The invitation of the Commune had reached the Friar through his illustrious patron Cosimo dei Medici in 1464, and during the interval which elapsed between the completion of the Pieve frescoes and Lippi's departure for Spoleto, Sandro may well have assisted his master in preparing cartoons for this important work. It is also highly probable that Botticelli visited Spoleto on his way to Rome in 1481, which would account for his familiarity with Fra Filippo's last works. In any case Sandro did not forget the debt that he owed to his old master, and when, after the Friar's sudden death in October, 1469, his assistant, Fra Diamante, brought his young son, Filippino, back to Florence, the lad entered Botticelli's workshop and grew up in the charge of his father's most distinguished pupil.

CHAPTER III

1467—1475

Sandro's early works.—The *Madonna della Vannella*.—The *Adoration of the Magi* in the National Gallery.—Influence of the Pollaiuoli on his style.—He works as their assistant.—The *Fortezza*.—*Judith and Holofernes*.—*St. Sebastian*.—The *Chigi Madonna*.

THE dark choir of the ancient church at Prato, with its sorely-injured but still beautiful and animated frescoes by the Carmelite painter, was, we have seen, the true school in which Sandro Botticelli received his artistic training, and the dreamy, impressionable youth first woke to a sense of his own genius. From this school he emerged an independent master when, on Fra Filippo's departure for Spoleto, he returned to settle in his old home at Florence. By this time he was three-and-twenty, and must have painted many pictures before he could have executed such works as the *Fortezza* and the long panel of the *Adoration of the Magi* (No. 592) in the National Gallery. But not a single specimen of his work at this period was known to be in existence until, a few years ago, Mr. Herbert Horne and Mr. Berenson discovered a damaged fresco of the *Virgin and Child* in the little oratory known as the *Madonna della Vannella* on the hillside near the village of Settignano. This painting originally adorned a wayside shrine in honour of Our Lady, whose kindly influence the Tuscan peasants invoked to shield from hail and tempest the vineyards and orchards on the hillside leading over the valley towards Fiesole. The Madonna is represented seated in a marble niche looking down on the Child, who stands on her knee and reaches out his little arms towards his mother. The form and action of the Child and the expression of his face strongly resemble Fra Filippo's babies, especially the infant of the Munich picture, but the drooping head of the Virgin and the gentle melancholy of her face are already characteristic of Botticelli. "The head of the Virgin, the shape of her veil, the features and colouring," writes Mr. Horne, "are all in

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Botticelli's manner and have that quality of line which none of his imitators could attain."¹

This interesting fresco was evidently painted either while Sandro was still working with the Carmelite friar, or very soon after his return from Prato. Another work of his which was probably executed two or three years later, about 1468 or 1469, is the long narrow panel of the *Adoration of the Magi* in the National Gallery (No. 592). This picture still bears the name of Filippino Lippi in the Catalogue, but Morelli and all the best critics have long recognized it as an early work of his master, Botticelli. Here the youthful-looking Virgin and Child are quite in Fra Filippo's style, and might almost be taken for his work, but the animated throng of attendants and spectators betray the scholar's hand, while the group of pages and servants leading horses in the Magi's train, at the opposite end of the picture, reveal the presence of another influence, and show us that the friar's pupil had found a new teacher. This was none other than Antonio Pollaiuolo, the goldsmith painter, who at that time stood at the head of the Naturalist school in Florence. The pupil of Andrea del Castagno and the heir of the great traditions which Donatello and Paolo Uccello had left behind them, this distinguished artist was the foremost representative of the scientific movement which had already taken so strong a hold on the Florentine painters of the fifteenth century. The flourishing *bottega*, which he and his brother Piero held in the Vacchereccia or Cow-market, was a centre for technical research and anatomical studies. Antonio



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MADONNA DELLA VANNELLA
(SETTIGNANO)

¹ "Revue Archéologique," vol. xxxix, p. 12.

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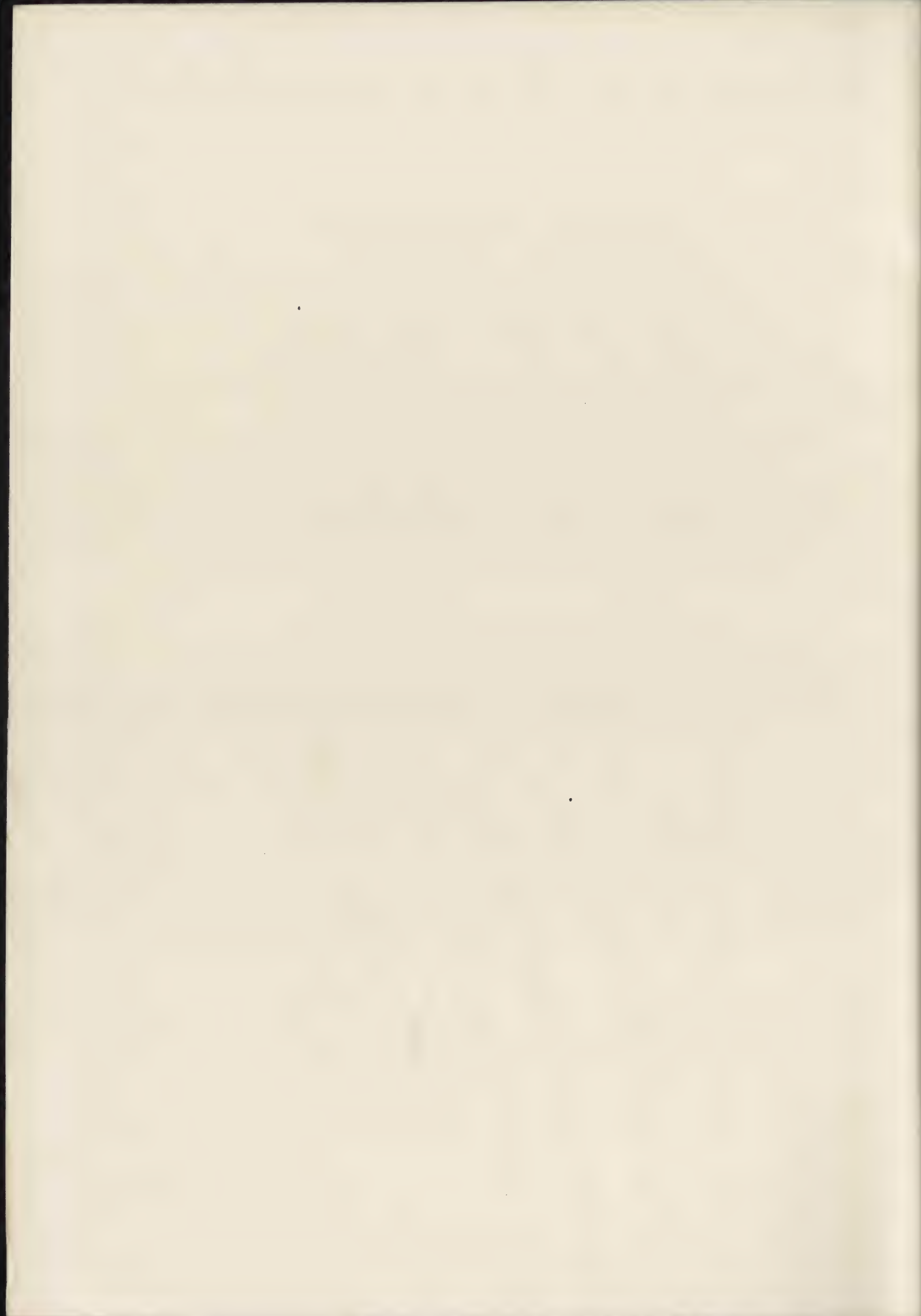
himself had the reputation of being the first metal-worker in Florence, and the thorough knowledge of anatomy which he had acquired, made Vasari say that "he treated nudes in a more modern style than any artist before him." The three mighty figures of Hercules, with which he decorated the Medici palace, early secured the patronage of the illustrious family whom he was to serve during the next five and thirty years; and when he went to Rome in 1489 Lorenzo dei Medici recommended him to Pope Innocent VIII as "the greatest master in the city, and one who, in the opinion of every intelligent person, has never been equalled." Another critic of authority, Benvenuto Cellini, describes Antonio Pollaiuolo as the best draughtsman of his day in Florence. "This man," writes Cellini, "did little else, but he drew marvellously, and always practised the same grand style of drawing. And he was so great a draughtsman that not only all the goldsmiths worked from his designs, but that many of the best sculptors and painters were glad to make use of them, and by this means attained the highest honour." The remarkable influence which Antonio Pollaiuolo exerted is evident in the works of nearly all the great masters of the next generation, from Leonardo and Signorelli to Raphael and Michelangelo. And it would be hard to over-estimate the importance of his teaching and example on the art of Botticelli. Without this period of close association with the goldsmith-painter his style would never have gained its force and virility. He would never have attained the power to represent action and movement, which is so marked a feature of his art; above all he would never have been able to give full expression to the deepest and innermost feelings of his soul.

Up to this period of his career, Sandro's artistic training had been conducted on wholly different lines. Both Filippo's teaching and his own temperament led him in an entirely opposite direction from the scientific naturalism which lay at the root of Pollaiuolo's methods. He had grown up in the Gothic traditions of the Giottesque masters of the fourteenth century, which the Carmelite painter had inherited from Lorenzo Monaco, from Masoino and Fra Angelico. And the ideal and poetic bent of his own imagination led him to strive above all for beauty of colouring, for grace of form and charm and sincerity of expression in his art.



Alinari.

FORTEZZA.
Uffizi Florence.



THE FORTEZZA

Now in the busy workshop of the Pollaiuoli brothers, in the heart of Florence, he found himself in an altogether new atmosphere, where questions of anatomy and foreshortening, the correct drawing of the nude and the accurate representation of movement, were the problems which absorbed the artist's thoughts and occupied his whole energy. Yet such was the commanding personality of the master, such the quick sympathy and receptivity of the scholar, that Sandro's art for the moment underwent a transformation. Fra Filippo's pupil caught the enthusiasm for scientific research that was in the air about him, and became for the time being a naturalist. The *Fortezza*, which he painted while he worked as an assistant in the shop of the Pollaiuoli brothers, is the best proof of the completeness with which Sandro learnt his new lessons. This noble figure was executed about the year 1470, as a companion to the six Virtues already completed by Antonio and Piero Pollaiuolo for the decoration of the Tribunal of Commerce. "As a youth," writes Antonio Billi, the oldest of Sandro's biographers, "he painted in the Mercatanzia a most beautiful *Fortezza*." Vasari and the anonymous writer of the "Codex Gaddiano," both give us the same information. The Aretine biographer tells us that the painter, while still very young, painted a *Fortezza* among the panels of the Virtues which Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo executed in the Mercatanzia of Florence, and in his notice of the last-named artists, the Anonimo remarks that Piero painted six Virtues on the walls of the Hall of Commerce, but that the seventh was by the hand of Sandro Botticelli. The writer evidently derived his information in this instance from a much earlier document, "Memoriale" of the priest Francesco Albertini. In the account of "the statues and pictures, worthy of being remembered, in this our illustrious city of Florence," which this learned Canon of S. Lorenzo drew up for his friend the sculptor Baccio di Montelupo, and printed in August, 1510, he gives a full description of the contents of the Palazzo Pubblico, and adds the following note: "I have not mentioned the six figures of the Virtues which are in the Arte della Mercantia by the hand of Pietro Pollaiuolo. The seventh is by Sandro." Albertini, who attended the celebrated scholar Giovanni Pico della Mirandola in his dying moments and witnessed his last will, was probably personally acquainted with the painter, whom he mentions in this familiar way, and wrote the

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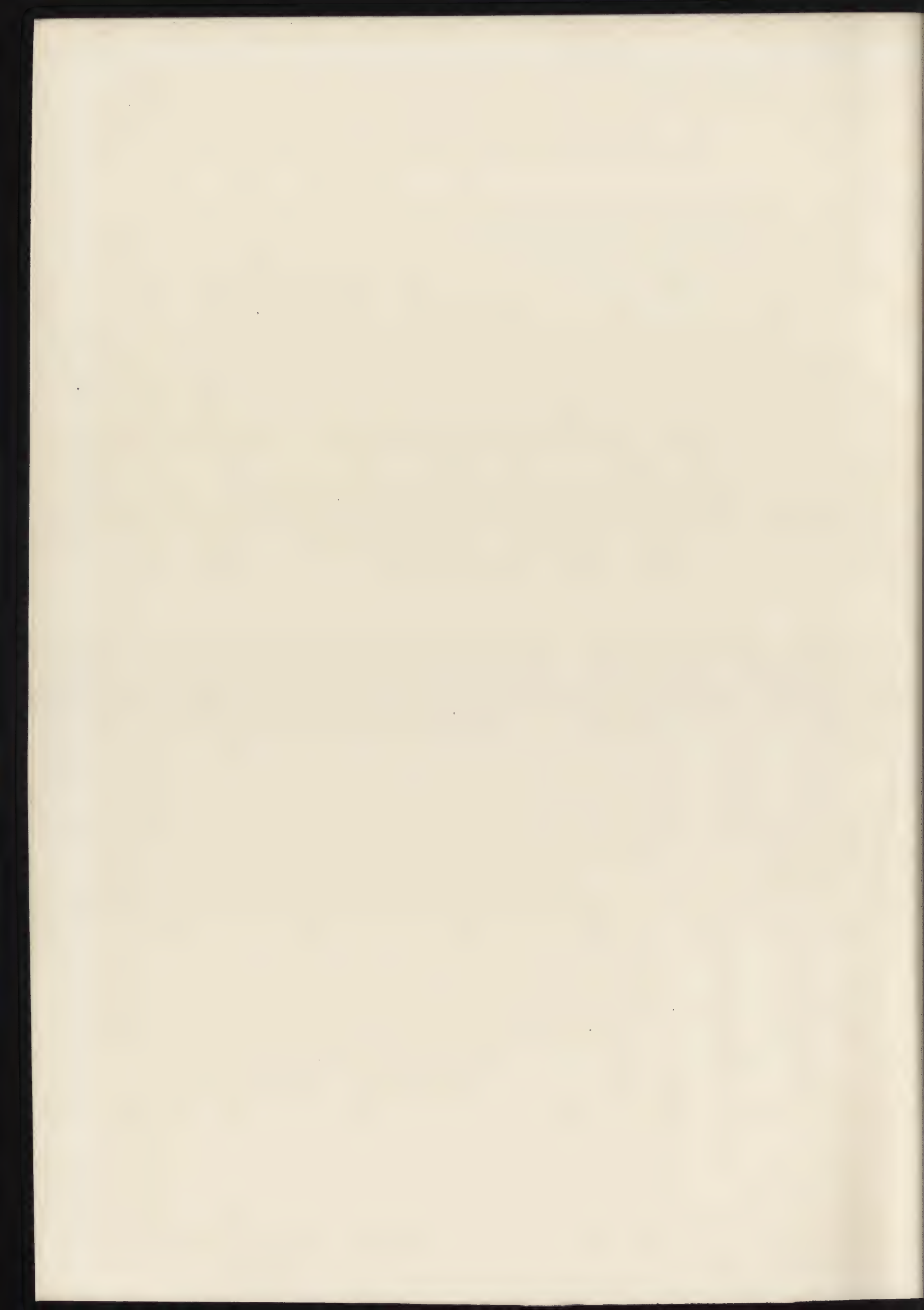
notice while he was alive, since this "Memoriale" was only printed three months after Sandro's death.

There can, therefore, be no doubt that the figure in question was painted by Sandro, although in this instance he followed the pattern set before him so closely that even Morelli would not accept the panel as his work. This tall slender maiden, wearing a breast-plate and corslet of steel and throned in a marble niche, is executed in the same pale colouring and sculptural style as the six companion Virtues that were painted by Piero Pollaiuolo, in all probability from his more illustrious brother's designs. The embroideries of her red robes and the coloured marbles of her throne are the same, and show how literally he copied his master's model. But in the arrangement of the draperies we see the touch of another hand, while the attitude of the figure and expression of the face are altogether Sandro's own. The drooping head and long nervous fingers clasping the mace that rests on her lap. The patient and weary but still resolute air all help to give that expression of restraint, of brave and steadfast endurance, which makes Botticelli's *Fortitude* unlike that of any other painter. Let us hear once more what Ruskin said of her long ago in an eloquent passage in his "Mornings in Florence": "What is chiefly notable in her is—that you would not, if you had to guess who she was, take her for Fortitude at all. Everybody else's Fortitudes announce themselves clearly and proudly. They have tower-like shields and lion-like helmets—and stand firm astride on their legs—and are confidently ready for all comers. Yes; that is your common Fortitude. Very grand, though common. But not the highest by any means. Ready for all comers, and a match for them, stands the universal Fortitude;—no thanks to her for standing so steady, then! But Botticelli's Fortitude is no match, it may be, for any that are coming. Worn somewhat, and not a little weary, instead of standing ready for all comers, she is sitting—apparently in reverie, her fingers playing restlessly and idly—nay, I think—even nervously, about the hilt of her sword. For her battle is not to begin to-day; nor did it begin yesterday. Many a morn and even have passed since it began; and now—is this to be the ending day of it? And if this—by what manner of end? That is what Sandro's *Fortitude* is thinking, and the playing fingers about the sword-hilt would fain let it fall, if it might be: and yet



Houghton.

THE RETURN OF JUDITH.
Uffizi.



JUDITH

how swiftly and gladly will they close on it, when the far-off trumpet blows, which she will hear through all her reverie!"¹

It is clear that Sandro's initiation in the school of naturalism, and even the powerful influence of Antonio Pollaiuolo's genius, could not quench the poetic spark in the young painter's nature. The same fine imaginative conception marks the other pictures which he painted at this period of his career. Foremost among these are the two small panels on the story of *Judith and Holofernes*, which are now in the Uffizi Gallery. These little panels are mentioned by Raffaello Borghini in his "Riposo," a work written early in the eighteenth century, and described in the following words: "Two little pictures: in one of which Holofernes is represented, lying in bed with his head cut off, and his barons standing around in amazement, and in the other Judith with the head in a sack. These belonged not long ago to M. Ridolfo Sirigatti, and he gave them to the most Serene lady Bianca Capello dei Medici, our Grand Duchess, hearing that Her Highness wished to adorn a writing cabinet with pictures and antique statues, and judging this little work of Botticelli worthy of a place there."² Even without this testimony, the authenticity of these precious little works would be undoubted. In spite of modern repainting, and clumsy restoration, they bear the unmistakable stamp of Sandro's brain and hand, and were evidently executed at a time when he was still strongly influenced by the Pollaiuoli and probably working in their shop. Here Botticelli comes before us for the first time as the narrator of an historical incident, and tells his story with dramatic vividness and energy, together with that touch of poetry and spiritual feeling which are never absent from his creations. The *Return of Judith* (No. 1156) especially, is marked by an originality of conception and charm of execution, which have rendered his version of the old Hebrew legend deservedly popular. We see Judith, clad in rich apparel, or, as the sacred text describes, "in her garments of gladness," bravely decked with bracelets and chains and ornaments, returning from the camp of the Assyrians across the mountains to Bethulia, strong in the might of the great deliverance that she has wrought for Israel. Her right hand holds the sword with which she has severed the

¹ Ruskin's "Mornings in Florence," p. 53.

² "Il Riposo," R. Borghini, vol. iii, p. 352.

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neck of Holofernes; in her left she bears an olive-branch, the token of peace, as she walks lightly and swiftly across the open hillside, followed by her faithful handmaiden Abra, carrying the bottle of wine and cruse of oil in one hand, and the head of Holofernes in the sack on her head. In the valley below, on the banks of a broad river, we see the walls and gates of the city and the groups of armed horsemen riding out to meet



Photograph—Houghton.]

THE RETURN OF JUDITH
(UFFIZI)

her. The figure of Judith bears a strong likeness to the *Fortezza*. She has the same long neck, high cheek bones, and peculiar type of feature. Her eyes have the same wistful look; her countenance wears the same expression of gentle sadness, and forms a striking contrast to the eager, intent air of her serving-maid, whose gaze is fixed in silent devotion on the mistress for whose sake she has dared to meet danger and death. The picture has suffered much from the restorer, who has altered the position of Judith's right foot, but has not succeeded in effacing the trace of the original pose. He has also repainted

most of the landscape and part of the draperies without, however, destroying the charm of the colour—the delicate mauve tints of Judith's robe and the orange hues of her maid's coarser skirts. But the most striking thing in the group is the new sense of life and movement that is everywhere perceptible—the quick, gliding step of Judith herself, the breeze that stirs the folds of her garments and catches her servant's veil and the sack that rests on her head. Here we see signs of the new power

HOLOFERNES

and skill which Sandro had gained in the *bottega* of the Pollaiuoli, and realize the advance towards the fuller expression of his own individuality which he had made in the last few years.

The second subject, that of *Holofernes lying dead in his Tent* (No. 1158), afforded him one of those opportunities for the display of anatomical knowledge and mastery of the nude which were eagerly sought after by the painters of the scientific school in Florence. Here the headless corpse of the murdered warrior is seen on the couch in his tent, with the curtains drawn back and the Assyrian captains and soldiers looking, with consternation on their faces, at the horrible sight. The scene in all its ghastly details is painted with dramatic truth and power, and the pitying expression on the face of the servant who stands on the right, holding his master's sword and gazing on the dead form lying there, is admirably rendered. The horse with its splendid trappings and arched neck in the background, and the rich costumes and armour of the warriors are cleverly imitated from the work of the goldsmith-painters, and in the glimpse of distant trees and fields, seen under the uplifted curtains of the tent, we have one of those picturesque touches revealing that instinctive love of beauty which no amount of naturalistic teaching could destroy. In connection with Botticelli's panels of Judith and Holofernes, we must not fail to mention the interesting announcement that has been lately made by Signor Gustavo Frizzoni, the well-known art-critic and distinguished follower of Morelli. This eminent connoisseur has recently discovered a third panel on the Story of Judith, in which he recognizes the hand of Botticelli.¹ In this little panel, which is only 36 centimetres high by 20 inches, and has all the finish and delicacy of a miniature, now belongs to the Kaufmann collection at Berlin. The Jewish heroine is represented issuing from the tent of Holofernes, bearing her sword in one hand and the head of her victim in the other. Her parted lips seem to utter a song of triumph to the God who has given her the victory, and the freedom and grace of her movement recalls the figure of Sandro's *Primavera*. This picture, in Signor Frizzoni's opinion, belongs to the painter's riper years, and was painted at a time when he had acquired full mastery over technique and composition. It would be interesting to

¹ "L'Arte," September, 1902, vol. v, p. 292.

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know more of its history and to compare it with the other works of Botticelli.

The martyrdom of St. Sebastian was another subject which, like the heroic deed of Judith, had an especial attraction for the Florentines of those days. The most famous example of the subject is the large altar-piece which Antonio Pollaiuolo himself executed in 1475, for the



Photograph—Hanfstäengl.

ST. SEBASTIAN
(BERLIN MUSEUM)

Chapel of the Pucci family in the Church of the Annunziata, and which was bought by the trustees of the National Gallery in the year 1857, from the representative of that noble family, the Marchese Pucci of Florence. We know how eloquent Vasari waxes in his description of the marvellous way in which the painter succeeded in imitating nature in his representation of the archer drawing his bow; "you see the veins and muscles swelling and the breath being held back!" And the work, Vasari adds, as we can well believe, "was more praised than any other ever painted by Antonio." But even before Antonio finished his great altar-piece for the Pucci, Botticelli had painted a *St. Sebastian* of his own for the church of Santa Maria Maggiore. This panel, the "Anonimo" tells us, was completed by Sandro in January, 1474; and Vasari further informs us that a *San Sebastiano* was among the most remarkable of the works which Botticelli painted for Lorenzo dei Medici. Sandro may have seen Antonio's cartoon for the Pucci *St. Sebastian*, and the sight may have moved

him to emulate the great artist's admired work. This picture so far resembles Pollaiuolo's masterpiece, that the figure of the saint is represented of the size of life, bound to the trunk of a tree, and the modelling was sufficiently in Antonio's style for the picture to be ascribed to that painter during many years by the Directors of the Berlin Gallery. But, as Crowe and Cavalcaselle, we believe, were the first to recognize, in other respects, the treatment of the subject shows a marked differ-

THE CHIGI MADONNA

ence, and the hand of Sandro is evident in the ideal beauty of the face and the serene grace of the youthful martyr who stands there, as it were, unconscious of the six arrows with which he is pierced. If in the glad and joyous movement of Judith Botticelli had shown his power of representing action, in this *St. Sebastian* he proved that he could equally well delineate the figure in repose. The romantic expression of this youthful martyr with the regular features and clusters of curls round his brow, is heightened by the poetic charm of the landscape background, with its steep cliffs and lofty towers on the shores of a distant sea. This landscape was to be repeated with slight variations in many other fifteenth-century pictures, and was to serve as a model for more than one of Sandro's contemporaries in the days to come.

Closely akin to these works is the beautiful early Madonna which Morelli discovered in a forgotten corner on the ground-floor of Prince Chigi's palace in



By permission of Messrs. P. and D. Colnaghi.]

THE "CHIGI" MADONNA

Rome. Since then, its sale and removal from Italy has been the subject of a notorious lawsuit, and the picture is now the property of Mrs. J. L. Gardner of Boston, in the United States. Before its departure for America, the panel underwent a thorough and judicious cleaning, which brought fresh beauties to light and displayed its admirable preservation. This of itself would suffice to heighten its value and make it doubly rare among Botticelli's paintings. But there is a youthful charm and *naïveté* about this little work, a delicacy

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and refinement of execution, together with a mystic vein of poetry which renders it exceptionally attractive. The composition is altogether original and reveals the thoughtful and spiritual cast of Sandro's imagination even in those early days. A boy-angel robed in green, with a wreath of bay-leaves on his fair locks, is in the act of presenting a bunch of purple grapes and ears of wheat to the Child, who rests on his mother's knee. The Virgin looks down pensively as she plucks one of the ripe ears of corn, and muses thoughtfully over those symbols of the Eucharist, while the Child in her arms lifts his little hand in blessing. Already the shadow of coming agony, some dim foreboding of the Cross and Passion, is clouding her soul with sadness, and the mysterious smile on the angel's face bids us see in this offering a prophetic type of the bread and wine of the Great Sacrifice. The attitude of the Madonna, seated before the open casement with her plump, rosy babe in her arms, the soft rose and pale blue tints of her draperies, the transparent veil on her rippling hair, and the charming glimpse of wooded hills and winding stream through the window, all recall Fra Filippo's style, and show us that Sandro had forgotten none of his first master's lessons. But, on the other hand, in his attempt to obtain structural completeness, in the fine modelling of the forms, and especially that of the angel's face, Botticelli shows how great was the progress which he had made since he left Fra Filippo's shop, and comes nearer to Pollaiuolo than in any other of his works. His technical proficiency, it must be confessed, is still incomplete; there are marked defects of drawing in the Virgin's hands, which are, as is often the case in Sandro's pictures, decidedly too large and out of proportion with the rest of the figure. But in spite of these obvious faults, the Chigi Madonna remains one of the most interesting of Botticelli's early works, and deserves to rank among the most typical and fascinating creations of Florentine painters in the fifteenth century.

CHAPTER IV

1474

Andrea del Verrocchio.—His influence on Botticelli.—Madonnas ascribed to Sandro at Naples and in S. Maria Nuova.—Ulmann's theory on this subject rejected by Morelli and others.—Leonardo da Vinci.—His friendship with Botticelli.—References to the painter in his writings.—Luca Pacioli.—Influence of Leonardo on Sandro's art.—Botticelli invited to Pisa.—His trial picture left unfinished.—He returns to Florence.—Tondo of the *Adoration of the Magi* in the National Gallery.

THE two chief tendencies which marked the course of Florentine art in the first half of the fifteenth century, met, as we have seen, in the work of Sandro Botticelli. On the one side he inherited the traditions of Quattrocento masters combined with the fertile invention and emotional feeling of Fra Filippo Lippi, on the other he was drawn into the current of the scientific movement in the *bottega* of the Pollaiuoli, and acquired his knowledge of structural design, and of the accurate representation of objects, from the goldsmith-painters. Yet a third influence, according to some critics, is to be traced in Botticelli's early works—that of Andrea del Verrocchio, the contemporary and in some respects the rival of the Pollaiuoli. Like Antonio and Piero, Andrea was a goldsmith and sculptor in the first place, and only a painter in the second place, and, like his great scholar Leonardo, he was a diligent student of geometry and mathematics as well as an accomplished musician. An assistant of Donatello in his boyhood, he succeeded the famous sculptor in the favour of the Medici and was employed to execute the tombs of Giovanni and Piero dei Medici, while Sandro was painting his *Fortezza* and working in the *bottega* of the Pollaiuoli. So vigorous a personality may well have exerted some influence on the impressionable young artist, but we cannot think there is any reason to suppose that Botticelli was as intimately associated with Verrocchio as some German critics have declared. The late Professor Ulmann, for instance, whose able biography of Botticelli appeared ten years ago,

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was strongly of opinion that Sandro worked for some years as Andrea's assistant, and detected the marks of this master's influence in a whole group of works which he assigned to Botticelli. But although Professor Steinmann and several English-Italian writers, including Signor Supino, have adopted this theory, and recognize Andrea's types in the faces of Botticelli's Madonnas and children, their contention can hardly be maintained. For the very pictures in which Dr. Ulmann and his followers see the broad forehead, heavy eyelids, strongly arched eyebrows, wide nostrils and full lips of Verrocchio's Virgins, and the blunt, unrefined forms of his babies, are those which a more careful and searching criticism has pronounced to be unworthy of Sandro's hand. The *Madonna of the Rose*, however, which bears a certain resemblance to the *Fortezza*, and is also accepted as a genuine Botticelli by Dr. Bode, was rejected by Morelli, who pointed out that the body of the Child was weak in modelling, and that the form of the hand and ear were unlike those of the master, while both in expression and movement, the figures were too devoid of life to be the work of Sandro. Again, both the *Madonna and Child with Angels*, in the Museum of Naples, and the somewhat similar group formerly in the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence and now in the Uffizi, which Dr. Ulmann and Professor Steinmann bring forward as proofs that at this period of his life Sandro followed Verrocchio unreservedly, are generally recognized as being inferior in style and quality to the other early works that we possess from his hand. In an able essay which has been lately republished, Mr. Berenson has convincingly shown that both of these Madonnas which so clearly "betray the hand of the imitator rather than that of the inventor of a style," are the work of a pupil of Botticelli's to whom he has given the name of Amico di Sandro.

The more closely we consider these Madonnas, the more we shall see how far they fall short of genuine works of this period, such, for instance, as the *Judith* or the *Chigi Madonna*, and with their rejection the argument of Sandro's training in Verrocchio's shop falls to the ground. But although there is no reason to think that Botticelli was ever one of Andrea's assistants, he was no doubt familiar with the great master's works. Verrocchio's *bottega*, which was one of the largest

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and most active in Florence, stood in the Cow-market, close to that of the Pollaiuoli, and Sandro and his comrades were doubtless intimately acquainted with all that was passing in the rival workshop. They knew the commissions which Messer Andrea received from wealthy patrons, and heard of each new picture or bronze which was executed under his direction, especially when, as in the case of the silver reliefs for the retable of the Baptistery, he was employed on the same works as Antonio Pollaiuolo. They saw the golden ball and cross for the summit of Brunellesco's cupola brought out of Verrocchio's *bottega*, and witnessed the memorable scene described by Luca Landucci in his Diary, when, on the 30th of May, 1471, they were placed on the top of the Duomo, to the solemn chanting of the "Te Deum."¹ And there was one at least of Andrea's apprentices with whom Sandro was on very friendly terms.

This was Leonardo da Vinci, the son of the well-known notary Ser Piero, who had been apprenticed to Verrocchio about the time that Botticelli left Fra Filippo's service and returned to Florence. In the year 1472, Leonardo was admitted into the Guild of Painters, but he remained with Andrea several years longer, and was still working under him in the month of June, 1476. Although eight years younger than Sandro, Verrocchio's pupil already gave signs of the surprising genius that was to make him supreme among Florentine masters, and both his personal charm and his literary and musical tastes must have appealed in an especial manner to the future painter of the *Primavera* and illustrator of Dante. "The radiance of his countenance," writes Vasari, "rejoiced the saddest heart," and even dumb animals felt the fascination of his presence. The grace and refinement of his creations, the infinite variety and depth of his thoughts, could not fail to excite Sandro's interest. And the two young painters had one great aim in common and believed, as Leonardo notes in his "Trattato" that a good painter's chief object was to represent not only bodily forms but the thoughts of man's heart. Many were the discussions which the two friends had over the problems of perspective and technique which were occupying the thoughts of the men of that generation. In the pages of Leonardo's "Codex Atlanticus," still preserved in the Ambrosian

¹ "Diario," p. 11.

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Library, there is an evident allusion to one of these discussions. "Sandro!" he exclaims, "you do not say why the second row of objects appear in our eyes lower than the third." Leonardo, as Signor Edmondo Solmi remarks,¹ was in the habit of jotting down on paper any ideas that came into his head, and in this passage, occurring as it does in a series of fragmentary notes on perspective, the writer is no doubt referring to some animated conversation on the subject with his old friend.

The mention of Botticelli in this connection recalls a passage in the writings of Fra Luca Pacioli, in which he speaks of our painter as one of the few living artists who was thoroughly familiar with the science of perspective. In his treatise "Summa De Arithmetica e Geometria," published at Venice in 1494, this Umbrian friar, who was so intimately associated with Leonardo during his long residence at Milan, after speaking of his illustrious fellow-countryman, Piero dei Franceschi, as the foremost master of perspective then living, goes on to mention other distinguished painters who have "often held colloquies on this subject." "Such, for instance, are in Venice, the brothers Giovanni and Gentile Bellini, and in Florence Alexandro Boticelli, Phylippino and Domenico Grillandaio, as well as Perugino, Luca of Cortona, Andrea Mantegna, Melozzo da Forli and his pupil Marco Palmezzano, whose works are all alike admirable in perspective and proportion, and by their style and manner of painting appear in our eyes to be not merely human but divine."²

The other passage in which Leonardo alludes to Botticelli is more generally known. It is to be found in the "Trattato della Pittura," and is the more remarkable since Sandro is the only painter whose name is mentioned in the course of the treatise. This time the writer recalls some occasion on which Botticelli had spoken disparagingly of the study of landscape as a secondary thing, which could easily be acquired, and was unworthy of serious effort on the painter's part. The remark is singular as coming from a master who has bestowed so much care on his backgrounds, and has painted such fair and varied landscapes in the Florentine Madonnas and Roman frescoes, in the *Birth of Venus* in the

¹ "Leonardo," Edmondo Solmi, p. 12.

² Quoted by Schmarsow, "Melozzo da Forli," p. 390.

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Uffizi, the *Primavera* of the Accademia, or the *Adoration of the Magi* at St. Petersburg. We can only suppose that Sandro must have dropped this contemptuous remark when his thoughts were intent on some great theme, or some failure to realize his conception had plunged him into a fit of despondency.

"That painter," writes Leonardo, "will not be universal, who does not care equally for all things which belong to painting. For instance, if a man does not care for landscapes, he will count landscape-painting to be a short and simple process, as our Botticelli, who said that this study was vain, because by throwing a sponge full of different colours against a wall, you would leave a stain on that wall which would have the effect of a fine landscape. And that painter," adds Leonardo, not without a touch of scorn, "would make very bad landscapes (*tristissimi paesi*)."

In spite of these differences of opinion, the two young painters had in reality more in common than any other of the rising generation who were working in the rival *botteghe* of the Vacchereccia. However different their aims and methods were, they were alike in their constant endeavour to attain ideal beauty and to give expression to the inner life of the soul. There can be little doubt that they influenced each other mutually, although the precise nature and degree of that influence is a problem that still remains to be solved. In his biography of Leonardo, the late M. Müntz has entered fully into the subject and pointed out several important motives which he considers Botticelli to have borrowed from his friend, to which we shall refer later. But certain characteristics of Sandro's early works undoubtedly bear a strong likeness to the style of Leonardo. The expressive features of his *St. Sebastian*, and of the angel with the strange smile in the *Chigi Madonna*, their thick clusters of curly locks, recall alike the heads of Leonardo and of his master Verrocchio, and would be pronounced by German critics to afford additional proof that Sandro worked at one time in Andrea's shop. This at least we may safely assert. A close communion of spirit bound the two artists together at this period of their career, and the evident efforts which Sandro was already making to express the finer and more subtle shades of feeling in his art, may have been in a measure due to his intercourse with Leonardo.

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In 1472, the same year in which Leonardo became a member of the Guild of Florentine Painters, Fra Diamante, the Carmelite assistant who had accompanied Fra Filippo Lippi to Spoleto, returned to Florence after finishing his dead master's work in the Duomo of that city. He brought with him Filippino, the Friar's little son by the nun Lucrezia Buti, and placed the boy in the charge of Sandro Botticelli to learn the art of painting, as his father had desired. By this time Sandro was evidently an independent master, with a workshop of his own, and in the following year his merit, as we have seen, was sufficient to attract the notice of Lorenzo dei Medici. His reputation soon spread beyond the walls of his native city, and a few months after he had completed his picture of St. Sebastian, he received an invitation from the Directors of the Duomo works at Pisa, who were desirous to see the decoration of the Campo Santo in that city completed without further delay.

During the last six years, another Florentine master had been engaged in continuing the work begun in the previous century by Tuscan artists. This was Benozzo Gozzoli, who had also long enjoyed the favour of the Medici, and had recently decorated the chapel of their palace with his famous frescoes of the *Procession of the Magi*. But whether the Pisan magnates were not altogether satisfied with Benozzo's work, or whether they were anxious for the more speedy accomplishment of this great task, they invited Botticelli to Pisa, in order to judge for themselves if his powers were equal to so important an undertaking. Accordingly, in May, 1474, he paid a short visit to Pisa and received a florin for the expenses of his journey from the Superintendent of the Duomo works. The result of this first interview was that Sandro agreed to paint a picture of the Assumption for the Chapel of the Incoronata in the Cathedral, on condition that, if the work met with the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities, he would be employed to paint the same subject on the walls of the Campo Santo.

In July Sandro returned to Pisa and began to execute this honourable commission. During the next three months the archives of the Cathedral Chapter contain frequent entries of supplies of corn given to Sandro, surnamed Botticelli, as well as of payments of money for the purchase of ultramarine, which he had procured from Florence. But after September, 1474, these entries cease altogether, and Botticelli's

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name no longer appears in the registers.¹ We can only conclude that the work was abandoned and the master's picture of the Assumption left unfinished, because, as Vasari writes, it did not satisfy either the painter or his employers. In all probability he was glad to return to Florence, where his reputation was already secured, and where a series of new and important works was awaiting him.

Soon after his return he may have executed the large *tondo* of the *Adoration of the Magi*, which is now in the National Gallery. The subject had become popular in Florence ever since, in 1423, Gentile da Fabriano, the Umbrian master, "whose hand," Michelangelo said, "was as gentle as his name," painted his great *Adoration* by order of Palla Strozzi, for the monks of Vallombrosa. Gentile had treated the old Christian story after the fashion of a mediaeval romance, surrounding it with all the pomp and splendour of those pageants that were so dear to the Florentine heart. He had borrowed motives from the Court life of the day, and introduced a gay troop of knights and pages, dogs and horses in the festal train. His example had been quickly followed by other artists, and Benozzo Gozzoli, in particular, had set forth the procession of the Three Kings in the most sumptuous style on the walls of the Medici Chapel. Sandro's own master, Fra Filippo, had been one of the first to adopt these fashionable motives. In one of his earliest works, the *tondo* in Sir Frederick Cook's collection at Richmond, the Carmelite friar introduced a vast number of richly-attired personages, with horses and dogs, into the scene, and at the same time cleverly arranged his composition to suit the circular form of his picture. This shape, which was to become so popular among Florentine artists in the latter part of the century, had hitherto been chiefly employed by sculptors, and was commonly used for bas-reliefs by Donatello and Luca della Robbia, but until this time had never, as far as we know, been adopted in painting.

Botticelli's love for this subject was still greater than that of his contemporaries, if we are to judge from the frequency with which he painted it. Many are the versions which he has left us of this his favourite story, executed with the most different intentions and placed in the midst of the most varied surroundings. Sometimes he lays the scene in a rocky wilderness, sometimes in the heart of a pine-forest. In some cases he

¹ L. B. Supino, "Il Campo Santo di Pisa," p. 28.

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introduces classical remains and Roman arches, in other instances he allows the eye to roam over wide landscapes with rocky heights and distant seas. In the Uffizi altar-piece the legend of the Three Kings becomes an apotheosis of the house of Medici; in a later work it affords Sandro an opportunity for celebrating Savonarola's dream of a New Jerusalem on earth. Last of all, we see it transformed into a mystic vision of the Celestial Country, where bright-hued seraphs sing their glad carols and dance hand hand-in-hand on the clouds of heaven, and angels welcome martyred saints to their embraces.

Two at least of these manifold versions of the subject belong to the early days, when the influence of the Pollaiuoli was still the predominant feature of his art. The first was, as we have seen, the long panel in the National Gallery (No. 592), painted about the year 1468. The second, which now belongs to the same collection, was evidently executed a few years later, and probably only finished after Sandro's return from Pisa in 1474. Like the earlier panel, this *Adoration* is still ascribed in the official catalogue to Filippino Lippi, and Dr. Richter is of opinion that it was the work of a follower of Botticelli rather than of the painter himself. But both Crowe and Cavalcaselle, who noticed the picture while it was still in the Fuller-Maitland collection, and the best Italian authorities, Morelli and Signor Frizzoni, as well as Dr. Ulmann and Mr. Berenson, have all declared it to be by the hand of Botticelli, and there seems no reason to doubt the attribution. This may indeed be the identical *tondo* of the *Epiphany* which Vasari saw in the house of the Pucci, that illustrious family which was so closely connected with the house of Medici, and Botticelli's work may have been ordered by the same Antonio Pucci who gave Antonio Pollaiuolo the commission for his great *St. Sebastian*.

Here Sandro, following his master's example, for the first time adopts the circular form, which he was afterwards to use with such excellent effect in some of his most popular compositions. As yet, however, he had not attained sufficient mastery to deal with this vast number of figures, and the general effect is somewhat confused and over-crowded. The Virgin and Child, St. Joseph, and the Three Kings who kneel before the Infant Christ, are placed exactly in the centre of the composition, an innovation which was afterwards adopted and improved

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upon by Leonardo. In the foreground are groups of youths conversing together with animated faces, and foreshortened horses with rich trappings and harness, in the style which Sandro had learnt from the Pollaiuoli. Other decorative details and homely incidents recall the *genre* painting of Fra Filippo and his school, and the crowded compositions of Benozzo Gozzoli. The long-tailed peacock perched on the marble column, the dog sitting upon his haunches by his master's side, as well as the trumpeters and buildings in the background, seem to have been directly taken from the frescoes in the Campo Santo of Pisa, where Botticelli had lately seen Benozzo at work. But Sandro's individuality breaks out, as is commonly the case, in many of the types and attitudes which he employs, and notably in the two figures in the left-hand corner of the *tondo*, which bear a marked resemblance to a similar group in the more famous *Adoration* which he painted a year or two later for the church of Santa Maria Novella. Before we go on to speak of this altarpiece, however, we must record a fresh commission which Sandro received from another quarter which was to bring him into close connection with the Medici and to lead to new and important developments in his career.

CHAPTER V

1474—1476

The House of Medici.—Cosimo and Piero's relations with artists.—Lorenzo il Magnifico—his love of art and letters.—The Tournament of 1469.—His brother Giuliano.—Botticelli paints a banner of Pallas for Giuliano's Tournament.—Description of the painting in contemporary documents.—Inventories of the Medici Collections.—Portraits of Lucrezia Tornabuoni, of Simonetta Vespucci, of Giuliano dei Medici.

WHEN Sandro Botticelli first opened a workshop and entered on his career as an independent master, a new and brilliant era was dawning for his native city of Florence. Under the rule of Cosimo dei Medici and his son, Piero il Gottoso, both art and learning had received the most liberal encouragement. Never before had there been a time when public buildings, churches and palaces, were raised and decorated on so large and splendid a scale, never were scholars and artists so generously patronized and so highly honoured as in these days. The members of this illustrious house not only lavished their wealth on monumental buildings and works of art, but took a keen personal interest in the men whom they employed. Humanists and poets were admitted into the family circle of the Palazzo in the Via Larga, and more than one artist of genius shared Cosimo's intimacy and was numbered among the friends of "the great man at the corner house." Brunellesco was deeply attached to him, Michelozzo followed him in his exile to Venice, and when Donatello died he begged his friends with his last breath to bury him close to his great patron's tomb in the church of San Lorenzo, so that he might be near Cosimo in death as he had been in life. Even Fra Filippo's freaks and follies only provoked a smile from this indulgent patron, who took the lively Carmelite friar under his especial protection, and when those about him urged that the painter's delinquencies should be punished, replied that men of his marvellous genius were angels of light and must not be treated like beasts of burden! "A man intelligent above all others,

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full of devotion to God, just and fair towards his fellows, moderate in his own wishes and ambitions, active in his private affairs, but still more prudent and careful in the public business. He did not live for himself alone, but for the service of God and his country." Such was the character of the great citizen which Marsilio Ficino, the humanist whom Cosimo had placed at the head of his newly-founded Platonic Academy, wrote to his pupil, the young Lorenzo dei Medici, after his grandfather's death.

Cosimo's elder son, Piero, shared his father's refined tastes, and in spite of continual ill-health, took keen interest in the artists whom he employed. From his favourite villa of Careggi, where he was constantly confined to his couch by acute rheumatic gout, he addressed letters to the painters who were at work in the Medici Palace and personally superintended the decoration of the chapel and halls. The kindness of his nature and the affection which he inspired in the artists who were in his service is shown by the letters of such men as Benozzo Gozzoli or Domenico Veneziano, who address Piero as their dearest friend—*Amico mio singularissimo*—and make the most anxious inquiries after his health. But Piero only survived his father five years, and both his own sufferings and political troubles both at home and abroad interfered with many of his artistic schemes. He died on the 3rd of September, 1469, at the age of fifty-three, and his elder son Lorenzo succeeded with general consent to the position which his father and grandfather had occupied at the head of the State. At this time Lorenzo, who had been born on the 1st of January, 1449, was just twenty-one, and had already given signs of the talents and wisdom which made his future career so remarkable. Under the care of his able and accomplished mother, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, both he and his younger brother Giuliano had received an excellent education and had been trained by the foremost scholars in all the learning of the day. Gentile Becchi of Urbino, the eminent Latinist, Marsilio Ficino, the great philosopher and translator of Plato, and Cristoforo Landino, the learned commentator of Virgil, and Dante were his principal teachers. Luigi Pulci, the poet of the "Morgante" and the witty writer of epigrams, Matteo Franco, were among his constant companions. His genuine love of poetry found expression in many charming verses, and

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Pico della Mirandola, who was no mere courtly flatterer, declared the Magnifico's poems to be equal to those of Dante and Petrarch. At the same time, Lorenzo's keen sense of natural enjoyment made him take delight in pleasures and sports of every description, in music and dancing, in hunting and all knightly exercises. The tournament which was held on the piazza in front of Santa Croce at the Carnival of 1469, a few months before Lorenzo's marriage to Clarice Orsini, was the most brilliant spectacle which had been seen in Florence for many a long day. On that occasion the young Medici rode into the lists in a gorgeous suit of red and white silk mounted on a horse given him by King Ferrante of Naples, with red and white velvet trappings embroidered with pearls. The silken scarf across his breast was embroidered with his device, *Le temps revient*, wreathed in fresh and withered roses. "In order to follow the custom of the day and do as others," says Lorenzo in the short memoir which he wrote in 1471, "I held a tournament on the Piazza Santa Croce with great splendour and at much expense. I find that it cost about 10,000 gold ducats. Although I was not very strong or skilled in jousting, the first prize was awarded to me, a helmet inlaid with silver and adorned by a figure of Mars."

But even at this early age Lorenzo did not waste his days in mere amusements. During the last years of his father's life he took a prominent part in the management of public business, and displayed a prudence and capacity which fitted him to assume the independent control of the State. All eyes were now turned to him as the natural successor to the exalted but unofficial post which Cosimo and Piero had held during the last thirty-five years. Lorenzo himself has described the offer which was made him by the leading citizens of Florence in a passage in his memoir, which is of interest: "On the second day after my father's death the most distinguished officers of the State and the chiefs of the ruling party came to our house to express their sorrow for our loss and to request me to undertake the administration of the government of the city as my father and grandfather had done till now. This proposal seeming contrary to my natural instincts—for I was then only twenty-one—and entailing much labour and danger, I accepted it very unwillingly, and only for the sake of protecting our friends and fortunes, since in Florence it is difficult to

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possess wealth without retaining political influence." "So far," he adds, writing two years later, "everything has succeeded to the honour and satisfaction of all parties, not because of any wisdom on my part, but by the grace of God and owing to the wise measures adopted by my fathers."

The young Medici, it soon became evident, as Guicciardini remarks, intended to be lord and master in the city, and began to assert himself on every occasion. "A ruler," he has said in his drama of San Giovanni and Paolo, "must establish his authority on a firm footing in the first few days of his reign." Lorenzo certainly acted on this principle. He was convinced that his sway was necessary for the good of the State, and neglected no means of strengthening his position. From the moment that he took up the reins of government he determined to surround himself with a splendid court, and showed himself a generous and enlightened patron of art and letters. Marsilio Ficino and the older humanists who had enjoyed Cosimo's favour were invited to hold meetings of their Academy in the palace of the Via Larga, and celebrated Plato's birthday in the gardens of the Medici villa at Careggi, while the younger scholars and poets were attracted to Florence by a patron whose love of antiquity was as genuine as their own, and who himself wrote Latin verses worthy to rank with their best productions. Niccolò Valori, one of his contemporaries, describes the great rejoicing with which Lorenzo received the newly-discovered bust of Plato that was sent him by Girolamo Roscio, and tells us how, when he was oppressed with the burden of public affairs, the contemplation of some noble Greek marble would suffice to restore his serenity of mind. When he went to Rome in 1471, to assist at the coronation of Pope Sixtus IV, the most memorable thing recorded in his memoir is that he brought back with him two marble busts of Augustus and Agrippa with which the Pope presented him, as well as a chalcedony cup and a number of medals and cameos which he had purchased there. So fine was his taste in these matters and so passionate his love for Greek and Roman art, that at the time of his death the collection of antique marbles and gems in the Medici Palace and in the Casino and gardens of San Marco was the finest in the world. From his early youth, his biographer Fabroni tells us, the title of *Magnifico*, which was commonly used in addressing

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princes and nobles, was applied to Lorenzo by universal consent in recognition of the grandeur of his character and the liberality of his actions. Architects and sculptors, painters and goldsmiths, alike found in the Magnifico a splendid and generous patron who had inherited the grand traditions of his ancestors, and grudged no expenditure on public monuments and works of art.

"I find from a quarto account book in my possession," wrote Lorenzo in a memorandum of 1472, "that from 1434 down to the present, time we have spent an almost incredible sum of money, amounting to 663,755 ducats in public works, charities and contributions to the taxes. But I do not regret this expenditure, although many persons think that we should have done better to have kept part of this money in our own purses, for I consider the money to have been well spent, since it has helped to promote great public objects."

Nor was Lorenzo's patronage confined to Florentines of distinction. Scholars and painters in all parts of Italy begged him to honour them with commissions or to help them in bad times and difficult moments. We find Andrea Mantegna writing from the court of the Gonzagas at Mantua to place his services at the Magnifico Lorenzo's disposal, and at the same time beg for a trifling gratuity to enable him to build a new house for himself and his family. His advice on artistic questions was eagerly sought after by other princes. The Kings of Portugal and Hungary, of France and Naples, Ercole d'Este, Lodovico Gonzaga and Lodovico Sforza alike applied to him for architects and painters to build and adorn their palaces. It was Lorenzo who recommended Leonardo to the Moro and Luca Fancelli and Giuliano di San Gallo to the King of Naples, and who sent Antonio Pollaiuolo and Filippino Lippi to Rome. "Since the Magnifico has sent the man to us," exclaimed Cardinal Caraffa when the Florentine painter arrived, "I would not change him for Apelles himself!" A patron with knowledge so wide and perception so keen could not fail to appreciate the genius of Sandro Botticelli, and to recognize how admirably fitted he was by nature for the decorative work which Lorenzo and his cultured circle required from the painters of their age. Both as the favourite pupil of Fra Filippo Lippi, that spoilt child of the Medici, whose talents had been held in such high esteem by Cosimo and his sons, and as the skilled assistant

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of Antonio Pollaiuolo, who was so constantly employed by three generations of the house of Medici, Sandro needed no introduction to Lorenzo's notice. Already, towards the close of 1473, the master had, as we have seen, received an order to paint a St. Sebastian for this august patron. In the following year, after he had returned from his unsuccessful visit to Pisa, he received a new commission from the Magnifico's brother, Giuliano dei Medici.

The second son of Piero was four years younger than Lorenzo, and was endowed with those personal attractions which his elder brother lacked. Tall and handsome, active and muscular, he excelled in all knightly exercises, in riding and wrestling, throwing the spear and tilting. While Lorenzo was decidedly plain with weak eyes, a broad nose, large mouth and sallow complexion, Giuliano's fine black eyes, curling dark hair, olive skin, and animated expression gave him a distinctly attractive and picturesque appearance. Although inferior to Lorenzo in ability and intellect, he inherited the refined taste of his family, was fond of music and painting, and wrote poetry which Poliziano describes as full of thought and feeling. From his boyhood Giuliano had been the darling of the people, and his reckless courage in the chase or tournament, his gay manners and courteous bearing made him a favourite with all classes. Poliziano and Machiavelli both tell us that he was the idol of the Florentines, and Paolo Giovio speaks of him as the prince and leader of the gilded youth of his day. But he was always loyal and affectionate to Lorenzo, and no shadow of jealousy or suspicion ever seems to have clouded the excellent understanding that existed between the brothers. While the elder of the two devoted his time and attention to the management of public affairs, the younger hunted and jousted and wrote verses in praise of fair ladies, and took a leading part in those pageants and amusements which delighted the eyes of Florence.

As Lorenzo's Tournament had been given in fulfilment of a promise which he made to the beautiful Lucrezia Donati, when she gave him a wreath of violets at Braccio Martelli's wedding feast, so now Giuliano held a *giostra* in honour of another fair lady, "la bella Simonetta," the young wife of his friend, Marco Vespucci. This daughter of a noble Genoese family, who at sixteen became the bride of Piero Vespucci's

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son, one of the most faithful followers of the Medici, had inspired the handsome Giuliano with a romantic devotion similar to that of Dante for Beatrice or of Petrarch for Laura. He composed verses in praise of her beauty and goodness, invoked her name when he rode in the lists, and made her the object of the Platonic passion which Poliziano celebrates in his famous poem. Giuliano's Tournament was held on the 28th of January, 1475, on the same Piazza di Santa Croce where Lorenzo's Giostra had taken place six years before. Then Piero had been alive, but now his two sons were the representatives of this illustrious house, and the stately pageant which gratified the hearts of the Florentines, afforded a fitting opportunity for celebrating the glories of the Medici brothers and their accession to supreme power.

Nothing which could add beauty or splendour to the show was neglected. Signor Poggi has recently published a document, which he discovered in the Magliabecchiana Library, giving several interesting details of the combatants who took part in the Giostra, and of the armour which they wore and the banners and devices that were borne before them. Seven youths of the noblest families in Florence, clad in richest apparel, resplendent with silks and jewels, with pearls and rubies, entered the lists that day; Pagolo Antonio Soderini, Piero Guicciardini, the cousin of the historian, who left his books, sorely against his inclination, and joined in the tourney, at Lorenzo and Giuliano's urgent entreaty, Benedetto dei Nerli, Luigi della Stufa, Piero degli Alberti and Giovanni Morelli. Each rider was accompanied by twenty-two youths in jewelled armour, and followed by a troop of men-at-arms, while a page in sumptuous attire bore a standard with his chosen device before him. As in Lorenzo's tournament, each cavalier had the image of his lady-love represented on his banner, so on this occasion Giuliano and his rivals each had the effigy of his mistress borne before him. The best artists in the city were employed, and there was quite a stir in the workshops along the banks of the Arno. Giuliano's armour and helmet were exquisitely wrought by Michele Bandinelli of Gaiuole, a talented goldsmith who served the Medici during many years, and whose wife, Smeralda, had her portrait painted by one of Botticelli's assistants about this time. A still more illustrious artist, Andrea del Verrocchio, painted the banner of another of the competitors, Giovanni Morelli.

BANNER OF PALLAS

The figure which he was desired to represent was that of a maiden robed in white on a crimson ground, with a "spiritello" or winged sprite—the boy Cupid—armed with his bow, and holding a pot of flowers in his hand, standing on the rock above. Other ladies, in the forms of nymphs and goddesses, clad in bright and varied hues, and bearing the mottoes of the respective knights, were represented on the different banners. Only Piero Guicciardini, who preferred humanist studies to the society of fair ladies, chose Apollo slaying the Python for his device. But Giuliano's mistress was represented in a singularly beautiful and elaborate style.

"The banner of Giuliano," we read, "was of blue *taffeta* (canvas), with the rising sun in the heavens, and in the centre a large figure of Pallas, wearing a vest of fine gold, a white robe and blue buskins, with her feet resting on the flames of burning olive branches. On her head she wore a helmet, under which her rippling locks flowed loose on the breeze. In her right hand she held a jousting lance, and in her left the shield of Medusa. Her eyes were fixed on the sun, and in the meadow of flowers where she stood, was the god of love, bound by golden cords to the trunk of an olive tree. On the boughs of the tree was written this motto: "La sans pareille."¹

This description of Giuliano's banner agrees closely with the imagery of Poliziano's famous verses in honour of the Giostra. The poet speaks of the dream which comes to Giuliano in his sleep, and tells us how the hero sees a vision of his lady, Simonetta, wearing the armour of Minerva and the shield of Medusa, while behind her he sees Cupid bound to the green column of Minerva's happy plant.

Pargli veder feroce la sua donna . . .
Legar Cupido alla verde colonna
Della felice pianta di Minerva.²

And, in his verse, Cupid bids Giuliano look up at the rising sun, on his lady's banner, the emblem of the glory which he is to win in the fight:

Alza gli occhi, alza Julio a quello fiamma
Che come un sol col suo splendor t' adombra.³

But for us, it is of still greater interest to find how exactly the description of the banner corresponds with Vasari's statement, that "Botti-

¹ "L'Arte," 1902, p. 71.

² "Stanze," v. 28.

³ "Stanze," v. 31.

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celli painted a life-sized figure of Pallas standing on a device of burning branches, in the Medici Palace." From this we may safely conclude that Giuliano's banner, bearing the figure of his mistress in the form of Pallas, was painted by Sandro Botticelli in the last months of 1474. That it was preserved among Lorenzo's most precious treasures we further learn from the following entry in an Inventory of the works of art in the Medici Palace, that was taken after the Magnifico's death in 1492, and copied in a similar list bearing the date of 1512:

"In the room of Piero a cloth (*panno*) set in a gold frame, about 4. *braccia* high by 2. wide, bearing a figure of Pa— [Pallas] with a burning shield and an arrow, by the hand of Sandro da Botticelli."¹

This Pallas is not to be confounded with the picture of *Pallas subduing the Centaur* by Sandro's hand that was painted some years later, after Lorenzo's return from Naples, to celebrate the triumph of the Medici over their enemies, and was discovered in 1895 by Mr. Spence, in the Pitti Palace. For, as M. Müntz proceeds to show, this work of Botticelli's is mentioned in two other Inventories of the contents of the Medici Palace, which were taken at a later period, and in both cases is described as *Minerva and a Centaur*. The word *panno*, in the entry of 1512, clearly refers to the banner carried in front of Giuliano in the Giostra, and this conclusion is further borne out by the following entry which comes just below in the same Inventory: "A gilded jousting-helmet with a figure of Cupid bound to a tree of laurel or olive."

The helmet in question was, no doubt, that which was worn by Giuliano himself in the Tournament, which is said to have been a marvel of the goldsmith's art. Unfortunately the banner has shared the fate which has befallen the great majority of the works that were painted by Sandro for the Medici and preserved for several generations in the palace of the Via Larga.

The Giostra was celebrated with triumphant success. Giuliano made a splendid figure as he rode into the lists that day in his flashing armour, mounted on the warhorse "Orso," which had been presented to him by Costanzo Sforza, the lord of Pesaro. There, before the eyes of his adored mistress, the gallant youth vanquished all his rivals, and bore

¹ E. Müntz, "Les Collections des Médicis," p. 86.



Houghton.

LA BELLA SIMONETTA.
Palazzo Pitti, Florence.



SIMONETTA VESPUCCI

off the prize, amidst the acclamations of the assembled multitudes. Botticelli's share in the day's festivity naturally brought him into close relations with the Medici brothers, and prepared the way for the future commissions which he received from Lorenzo and the members of his immediate circle. Vasari mentions two "most beautiful profile heads of women," which must have been executed in those early days, and which he had seen among the treasures of the Medici Palace, in the reign of Duke Cosimo. There was the likeness of Lucrezia Tornabuoni, the admirable mother to whom Lorenzo was so deeply attached, and whose death in 1482 he lamented so truly. The other, Vasari tells us, was said to be the portrait of the "innamorata di Giuliano di Medici," that bella Simonetta who, as we have already seen, was the lady of his heart and the Queen of his Tournament. The Vespucci, we know, were among Botticelli's earliest and most constant patrons. Their *palazzo* was in the same parish as Sandro's home, and they had a country house at Peretola, where the Filipepi also owned property. Vasari tells us that the artist helped in the decoration of their palace, and painted a series of subjects full of beautiful and animated figures set in richly carved frames of walnut wood. And a few years after Simonetta's death he was employed by her kinsman, the ecclesiastic Giorgio Antonio Vespucci, to paint a fresco in the parish church of Ognissanti, where the family had their burial place. So that nothing is more likely than that Sandro should have painted the portrait of Marco's fair wife, whose features he had already reproduced in the *Pallas* of the standard which Giuliano had proudly borne to the fray on the great day of his Giostra. Two portraits which bore the names of these ladies and were not without a certain relationship in style and execution, were formerly ascribed to the master and supposed to be the works described by Vasari. One is the profile bust of a pleasant-looking, fair-haired lady clad in the simple everyday dress of a Florentine citizen's wife, with an honest, sensible face, such as we should expect to belong to Lorenzo's wise and large-hearted mother. But although the picture, which Rumohr bought in Florence for the Berlin Gallery, may possibly represent Lucrezia Tornabuoni, its execution is too inferior to be from the hand of Botticelli, and it can only be a school work. The profile of Simonetta in the Pitti has more affinity with Sandro's work, and the features agree with Ghirlandajo's

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portrait of Marco Vespucci's wife in his Ognissanti fresco; but the lack of grace in the figure and the exaggerated proportions of the long, narrow neck, make it impossible to believe that he was its author. Yet there is character as well as refinement in the clear-cut features, and undoubted charm in the slender, girlish form, with its quiet, simple dress of Puritan simplicity, the plain white cap and white slashed sleeve of the dark square-cut bodice, which in shape and hue so closely resembles the Berlin picture. Mr. Berenson has ascribed this much-discussed portrait to the unknown assistant and imitator whom he styles Amico di Sandro, and who may have executed this picture in his master's *bottega*. A halo of romance surrounds this Florentine beauty whose charms made so profound an impression on Lorenzo and his companions, and whose early death was so deeply lamented by the members of that brilliant circle. Poliziano describes her as "a simple and innocent maiden, who never gave cause for jealousy or scandal," and says, that "among other excellent gifts she had so sweet and attractive a manner that all those who had any familiar acquaintance with her, or to whom she paid any attention, thought themselves the object of her affections. Yet no woman ever envied her, but all gave her great praise, and it seemed an extraordinary thing that so many men should love her without exciting any jealousy, and that so many ladies should praise her without feeling any envy."

Lorenzo himself was sincerely attached to Marco Vespucci's charming young wife, and speaks and writes of her with brotherly affection and sympathy. His intimate friendship with the Vespucci brothers brought him into frequent relations with her, and he was deeply concerned when, in the spring of 1476, only a year after Giuliano's *Tournament*, she was attacked by the fatal disease which put an end to her life. He sent his own doctor, Maestro Stefano, to attend her, and when he went to Pisa in April, charged her father-in-law Piero to let him have the latest reports of her health. On the 16th Piero wrote: "La Simonetta is much the same as when you left. There is but little improvement in her condition. She is attended by Maestro Stefano and everyone about her in the most assiduous manner, and this, you may be sure, will always be the case." On the 18th Piero was able to send better news. "A day or two ago," he writes to Lorenzo, "I told you of Simonetta's illness.



Marcoszi.

GIULIANO DEI MEDICI.
Bergamo.

SIMONETTA VESPUCCI

Now, by the grace of God and the skill of your physician, Maestro Stefano, she is a little better. She has less fever and oppression on her chest; eats and sleeps better. From what the doctors say, we quite hope that her illness will not last long. Little can be done for her in the way of medicine, but great care is necessary. Since Maestro Stefano's good advice has been the cause of the improvement, we all of us thank you exceedingly, and so does her mother, who is now at Piombino, and feels most grateful for the light which he has thrown upon her illness." Piero goes on to beg Lorenzo to recall the doctor, and tell him what fees he ought to receive, adding that he is unwilling to detain the physician longer, and fears that he may be unable to satisfy his claims. But the improvement in the patient's condition proved only temporary, and four days later Piero wrote again to inform the Magnifico that his daughter-in-law was growing rapidly worse. The two doctors, Maestro Stefano and her habitual physician Maestro Moyse—evidently, as most doctors were in those days, of Jewish race—had held a consultation and did not agree as to the cause of her illness. "Maestro Stefano maintains that it is neither consumption nor phthisis, and Maestro Moyse holds the contrary opinion; I know not which of the two is right. They have, however, agreed to give their patient a certain medicine which they both hold to be an efficacious remedy. I know not," adds Piero sorrowfully, "what the result may prove. God grant that it may have the desired effect!" And he begs Lorenzo to allow Maestro Stefano to remain for another week, by which time it will be easier to see the course of events. Before the week was over, poor Simonetta had breathed her last, and Lorenzo's trusted servant, Bettini, wrote to his master of the sad event: "The blessed soul of Simonetta has, I have just heard, passed into Paradise. Her end, it may be truly said, was another Triumph of Death, and indeed, if you had seen her lying dead, she would have seemed to you no less beautiful and attractive than she was in life. *Requiescat in pace.*"

On the following day the funeral took place, and Simonetta was borne to her grave with her fair face uncovered, "that all might see her beauty, which was still greater in death than it had been in life." In Petrarch's words:

Morte bella pareva nel suo bel volto.

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Bettini describes the tears and lamentations of the crowds who followed the funeral train from the house of the Vespucci to Sandro's own parish church of Ognissanti, where Marco's dead wife was laid in the burial vault of his family. Lorenzo has told us how the news reached him at Pisa on that sweet April evening, and how as he walked in the garden, thinking sadly of the beloved dead, a bright star rose suddenly above the horizon, and he knew that it was the blessed Simonetta's spirit which had been transformed into this new constellation. "All the learned Florentines," he goes on to say, "were grieved for her, and lamented the bitterness of her death, in prose and verse, seeking to praise her each according to his faculty." Lorenzo himself wrote sonnets in her memory, Poliziano composed his famous Latin epigram:

Dum pulchra effertur nigro Simonetta feretro,

and inspired by Giuliano, who had been present at his adored lady's deathbed, described how "the nymph, calm and serene in the hour of death, turned with full confidence to God." Pagan conceits and Christian hopes are blended, in the same strange manner, in the beautiful Elegy which Bernardo Pulci composed on this occasion, and dedicated to the sorrowing Giuliano. He calls on the nymphs and goddesses, who endowed Simonetta with rich beauty, to have pity on sad Genoa and the mourning banks of the Arno, and tells how the blessed spirit—"felice alma beata"—has fled from the trouble of this life to the eternal realm where Laura and Beatrice wait to welcome her. In a sonnet, which has a prophetic strain, he paints the happy soul bending from heaven to bid her lover weep no more, lest his tears should mar her bliss, and tells him that all her thoughts are still of him, on that blessed shore where she awaits his coming.

If Simonetta's name lives in the immortal verse of these Florentine poets, tradition has associated it no less intimately with the art of Botticelli. A whole group of portraits, in which this gentle maiden is represented with the golden curls, bright eyes and "*dolce riso*," of which the poets sing, are to be found in public and private collections, all alike ascribed to Sandro. Chief among these is the beautiful portrait at Chantilly, inscribed with the words—"Simonetta Januensis Vespuccia," in which the best modern critics now recognize the hand of Piero di



Spooner.

PORTRAIT.
National Gallery.



OTHER PORTRAITS

Cosimo, the no less attractive bust in Sir Frederick Cook's collection at Richmond, and a somewhat similar profile at Berlin, which originally came from the Medici palace. All of these have the same fair, rippling hair, the same animated expression, the same rich costume, and ornaments of pearl and gold, in marked contrast to the Puritan simplicity of the Pitti portrait. Whether they came from Botticelli's workshop or are copies of some lost original, they all have certain distinctive features which reappear in Sandro's conceptions. This has led some writers, notably Mr. Ruskin, to see in the peculiar types which recur in his paintings—the long throat, tall, slender form and angular features, reminiscences of Giuliano's lost love, the fair mistress whose fame lives in Poliziano's verse and Lorenzo's sonnets. It is Simonetta, Mr. Ruskin tells us, in a note to his "*Ariadne Florentina*,"¹ who was the model of all Sandro's fairest women. He paints her as Venus rising new-born from the waves and holding court in the bowers of spring; or Abundance, light of foot and glad of heart, scattering her treasures of plenty as she walks; as Zipporah at the well, where Moses waters her father's flock; or as Truth, rejected of men, calling on heaven to bear her witness and teach Florence the lesson which her children refused to learn. The theory, interesting and ingenious as it appears, will hardly bear too strict an examination, but the tradition which ascribes the authorship of these numerous portraits of Simonetta to Botticelli affords another proof of the painter's close connection with the Medici house.

Unfortunately, the other portraits which Sandro painted for the Medici have shared the same fatality which has attended his pictures of Simonetta. Two portraits of Giuliano, with the olive skin and thick locks framing his strongly-marked features and lively black eyes, are still, it is true, in existence, and were during many years the subject of an animated controversy between Italian and German critics. Morelli contended that the portrait at Bergamo was the original work by Sandro, while Dr. Bode stood out stoutly in defence of the Berlin picture. As a matter of fact both of these lack the life and vigour of Botticelli's art; and Mr. Berenson maintains that, like the *Bella Simonetta* of the Pitti, which it resembles strongly in the hardness of outline and in the modelling of the face, the portrait of Giuliano, in the

¹ "*Ariadne Florentina*," p. 258.

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Morelli collection at Bergamo, is by the hand of an assistant whom he styles Amico di Sandro.

The only Medici portrait now in existence to which we can point with any certainty as being the work of Botticelli, is one of the Magnifico's uncle, Giovanni. This handsome and genial prince, who had laughed over Fra Filippo's escapades and admired his art so keenly,



Photograph—Houghton.]

GIOVANNI DEI MEDICI
(UFFIZI)

died in 1463, at the age of forty-two, to the bitter grief of his old father, so that Sandro could never have known him personally. His little picture of Cosimo's younger son must have been copied from some earlier image, whether a medal or one of the wax effigies that were modelled from a cast taken after death. Giovanni is represented wearing a black vest with a scarlet cap on his fair curly locks, and a view of the valley of the Arno with the river winding through the plains in the background. The regular features are admirably modelled, and there is just that touch of melancholy in the expression which is often

seen on the faces of those who die young. In order that there should be no mistake as to his identity the painter represented Giovanni holding in both hands a medal bearing the effigy of Cosimo, the old father to whom he was so fondly attached, and who used to say as he wandered through the rooms of his stately palace, inconsolable for the loss of his favourite son: "This is too large a house for so small a family."



From carbon-print by Messrs. Braun, Clement and Co., Dornach.

PORTRAIT OF A MEDICI LADY.

Frankfort.



OTHER PORTRAITS

The genuineness of this portrait is, we must own, disputed by several critics of authority. Dr. Bode, among others, considers the drawing of the hands too faulty for Sandro, and has recently put forward his reasons for assigning it to an inferior artist. He further declares it as his opinion that the person represented is not Giovanni dei Medici, but the medallist Niccolò Forzore da Spinelli of Arezzo, who was frequently employed by the Medici family.

One other portrait, which is now universally recognized as the work of Sandro, is the bust of a Florentine youth in the National Gallery (No. 626). This portrait, which was long attributed to Masaccio, and first restored to its true author by Morelli and Dr. Frizzoni, is evidently an early work, but already shows signs of that mastery which Botticelli afterwards revealed in portraiture. We have no clue to the personality of this youth in the red cap, with the broad forehead and the mass of thick wavy locks; but the force and beauty with which his bright, open countenance and keen intellectual air are rendered awakens our curiosity. He was in all probability some comrade of Sandro's youth, whether a student of art or letters, who belonged to the burgher class, and whose strong, eager face, and evident enjoyment of life forms a striking contrast to the high-bred air and mournful expression of Giovanni dei Medici.

CHAPTER VI

1476—1478

The *Adoration of the Magi* in the Uffizi.—Portraits of the Medici introduced.—History of the picture.—The altar of the Lami family in Santa Maria Novella.—Relation of Botticelli's work to Leonardo's unfinished *Adoration of the Magi*.—Vasari's praise.

THE first work in which Botticelli revealed the full individuality of his style and the complete mastery of means to which he had attained during his second period of training in the *bottega* of the Pollaiuoli, was the *Adoration of the Magi* now in the Uffizi gallery. The chief thing that strikes us in this famous little altar-piece is the boldness and originality of the conception. Certain traditional features which belonged to all former versions of this favourite subject are still retained. The peacock with spreading tail is perched on the rough-hewn stones of the ruined wall which supports the wooden roof of the stable of Bethlehem; and the Star of the East, standing over the place where the young Child lay, pours a golden flood of light on the Holy Family. But the Virgin and Child occupy a prominent position in the centre of the picture, and are raised on a higher plane than the Magi and their followers, while St. Joseph looks on from behind, leaning his head on his hand, wrapt in profound contemplation. The number of spectators is greatly reduced, and although as many as thirty figures are still retained, the skill with which they are arranged in separate groups causes the number to appear much less. The sense of confusion and over-crowding which mars the effect of the *tondo* of this subject, in the National Gallery, is thus avoided, and the composition gains immensely in dignity and solemnity.

Immediately in front of the central group, kneeling devoutly at the feet of the Divine Child, are the Three Kings, bearing the offerings which they have brought with them from the far East. In these three Magi we recognize the features of three illustrious representatives of the

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house of Medici, Cosimo and his two sons Piero and Giovanni. The "Anonimo Gaddiano" mentions this picture as "a little altar-piece painted by Sandro, by the side of the central door in the church of Santa Maria Novella," and expressly states that it contains "many portraits of persons" (*al naturale*). Vasari goes further and gives us the names of the personages who are represented. But he is evidently mistaken in identifying the second king with Giuliano, Lorenzo's younger brother, or as the historian describes him, "the father of Pope



Photograph—Houghton.]

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI
(UFFIZI)

Clement VII.," whereas the personage whose features are here reproduced is plainly Lorenzo's father, Piero dei Medici.

The venerable old man in the dark green mantle edged with fur and embroidered with gold, who bends down to kiss the feet of the Child with tender love and an air of evident satisfaction, writes Vasari, at having reached the goal of his long and perilous journey, is Cosimo, the Father of his country, and founder of this illustrious house. His features are familiar to us in medals and other reproductions, but Vasari declares with truth that of all the portraits which have been taken of him, this one is the most lifelike and natural that has ever

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been seen. In the second King, kneeling in the foreground with the golden casket in his hand, and clad in a scarlet robe lined with ermine, we recognize the massive features and dark hair of Piero il Gottoso, whose bust by the hand of Mino da Fiesole formerly stood in an antechamber of the Medici palace and is now in the Museum of the Bargello. The third King, robed in white, kneeling on Piero's right and turning his face with the finely-chiselled features towards his brother, is Cosimo's younger son, Giovanni. Many critics have recognized his nephew



Photograph—Houghton.]

Sandro Botticelli

GROUP FROM THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI
(UFFIZI)

Giuliano in the handsome youth with the jet-black locks and the melancholy countenance, clad in black, who stands immediately behind Giovanni. The cut of his features, the shape of his head and arrangement of his hair, as well as the half-shut eyelids, closely resemble the Bergamo portrait, which must have been painted about this time in Sandro's workshop, and although the painter would hardly, as Mr. Horne has remarked, have introduced a living personage as one of the Three Magi, there is no reason why Giuliano should not have figured among the prominent members of the Magi's suite. Professor Ulmann, Dr. Steinmann, and other critics are further of opinion that Lorenzo

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himself is the youth who stands in the left-hand corner of the picture, wearing a crimson doublet embroidered with gold, and resting both hands on the hilt of his sword. In this case, however, the likeness is far less marked; neither is it easy to identify the other personages in the group, although the tall and dignified figure in the act of turning round to speak to his companion is supposed by some writers to be Angelo Poliziano, the poet of the Giostra and intimate friend of the Medici brothers.



[Photograph—Houghton.]

GROUP FROM THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

(UFFIZI)

One other figure in this altar-piece, however, is undoubtedly a portrait. The tall man with the hooked nose and dark, curling hair, standing in the right-hand corner, wrapped in a long, orange-coloured mantle, is clearly the portrait of the painter himself. Here we see him in what was evidently a characteristic attitude, looking back over his shoulder and fixing his keen gaze upon us. The powerful head, shaggy locks, and deep-set eyes all give the impression of a man of strong character and great intellectual force, and bear a striking likeness to the well-known portrait of Botticelli which his pupil, Filippino Lippi,

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was to introduce into his fresco of the *Crucifixion of St. Peter* in the Brancacci Chapel, eight or nine years later.

The scientific arrangement of the whole composition, the skilful manner in which the separate groups are balanced, shows how much time and thought the painter must have expended on the work, while the masterly modelling of each individual head, and the delicate finish bestowed on every detail, reveal his anxiety to bring the execution of



Photograph—Houghton.]

PORTRAIT OF BOTTICELLI FROM THE
ADORATION OF THE MAGI
(UFFIZI)

the picture to the highest degree of perfection. Curiously enough, the group of the Virgin and Child strikes us as the poorest part of the work. The relative proportions of the Child and of the Mother's hands are as faulty as in the *Chigi Madonna*, and this portion of the composition seems to have interested the painter less than the surrounding figures. But we hardly notice these defects in the general impression of completeness and harmony which the picture produces, and it is easy to understand the enthusiastic admiration which it excited among

Botticelli's contemporaries. Among all his works it is the one which Vasari singles out for the highest praise: "It is impossible," he writes after giving a full account of the chief figures in the picture, "to describe the beauty which Sandro has given to the different heads that we see here. They are all placed in different attitudes. Some are seen full-face, others in profile, some again at three-quarters, while others are looking down. Their variety is infinite. Young and old are represented with a diversity and individuality that reveals the perfect mastery of his

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art. And we also notice that the followers of the Three Kings are kept separate, and are divided in such a manner that you see which are the servants of each one. In short, the work is certainly most admirable, and is so beautiful, alike in colouring, design and composition, that every artist of our times is filled with amazement at the sight."

Again, at the close of his biography, Vasari returns to the subject and repeats his encomium of the masterpiece which he had already praised in such high terms. "All of Sandro's pictures, indeed," he writes, "deserved great praise, especially those to which he devoted both diligence and love, such as the altar-piece of the Magi in Santa Maria Novella, which, as I have already said, is truly marvellous."

The date of this *Adoration*, which was evidently painted about the year 1476, and the introduction of the Medici portraits, has, not unnaturally, led modern writers to conclude that the altar-piece was presented by Lorenzo il Magnifico to the church of Santa Maria Novella, as a thank offering for his escape from the daggers of treacherous conspirators who murdered his brother Giuliano. But there is no documentary evidence in support of this theory, and, within the last year or two, Mr. Horne, to whom we owe so much valuable information regarding Botticelli, has discovered the true history of this famous picture. We know now that it was originally painted for a merchant of the Lami family, who ordered it for the altar of a chapel in Santa Maria Novella which he had recently erected and adorned with the richest marbles.

A record in the Laurentian Library,¹ first published by M. Mesnil, proves that this citizen's name was Gasparre Zenobii del Lami, the son of a chemist and barber, who amassed considerable wealth and owned lands and woods in the neighbourhood of Florence. Gasparre, we learn from the same source, was a member of the Compagnia di Gesù Pellegrino, which held its meetings in the church of Santa Maria Novella, and to which, on his death in 1481, he bequeathed an illuminated Book of Offices, bound in black satin. The fact that he bore the name of one of the Three Kings may have prompted him to choose the *Adoration of the Magi* for the picture which, according to the entry in the Codex, "he employed *Sandro Botticello Fiorentino* to paint for the altar which he had raised, which was all of carved marbles, and at the foot of which

¹ "Codex Baldovinetti," p. 124, quoted by M. Mesnil in "Miscellanea d'Arte," 1903, p. 96.

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he was buried." M. Mesnil suggests with great probability that in the old white-headed man standing behind Giuliano, holding the edge of his cloak, to the right of the picture, we have the portrait of Gasparre Lami, who would have been sixty-six in 1476. Whether Botticelli's intimate relations with the Medici brothers led the wealthy citizen to introduce the portraits of their kinsmen in his altar-piece, or whether Gasparre was glad of this opportunity to pay a graceful compliment to these powerful personages, we cannot tell; but it is plain, from the pains which the painter bestowed on these figures, that this formed an important part of his task. The altar of the Lami in Santa Maria Novella became known as the altar of the Epiphany, we learn from an early record of the seventeenth century, which is reproduced in Father Gaetano Martini's *Sepolcrario* of 1729,¹ "because it was adorned by a picture of the story of the Three Magi, painted by that most excellent master, Sandro Botticelli, and held by all to be a marvellously fine work."

Albertini, who, as we have seen, wrote in Sandro's lifetime, Antonio Billi and the Anonimo Gaddiano, all describe the altar-piece of the Magi by Sandro Botticelli as hanging between the doors or on one side of the central door of the great church. It remained there until, in 1570, the ancient altar of the Lami family was removed, owing to certain alterations that were made in the church by the Grand Duke Cosimo's orders. Then Sandro's altar-piece was sold to Fabio Arazzola, Marchese di Mondragone, a Spanish chamberlain in the Grand Duke's service, and carried off to his new palace in the Via del Giglio. Five years later Mondragone fell into disgrace and was accused of revealing secrets of State to Philip II. He himself received notice to quit Florence, and his splendid palace, with all its contents, was hastily sold. Then Botticelli's *Adoration of the Magi* passed into the Grand Duke's collection and remained at the villa of Poggio Imperiale, until it was removed to the Uffizi in 1796.

The most curious part of the whole story is that by that time even Botticelli's authorship was forgotten, and up to the last thirty years the painting bore the name of Domenico Ghirlandajo, and "was admired," Milanese tells us, as "a stupendous work of that master,"

¹ Herbert Horne, "The Story of a famous Botticelli" ("Monthly Review," 1902).

LEONARDO'S ADORATION

while every annotator of Vasari's "Lives" and Borghini's "Riposo" successively "lamented the disappearance of Sandro's highly-extolled *Adoration*." The fact that this attribution to Ghirlandajo should have been accepted shows how closely Sandro's picture resembles the work of the realists, and how in his portraits of the Medici he equalled the achievements of his rivals in this direction. But one day the director of the collection of drawings, Carlo Pini, was struck with the similitude of the so-called Ghirlandajo to Vasari's description of Botticelli's missing altar-piece, and a careful examination of the panel, which fortunately still remains in excellent preservation, confirmed the truth of his discovery.

Another point of interest about this picture is its obvious connection with Leonardo's unfinished *Adoration of the Magi* also in the Uffizi (No. 1252). This great work, the only painting by Leonardo that still remains in his own city, has recently been moved from its old place by the new Director of the gallery, Dr. Corrado Ricci, and placed in a position where it can be more closely inspected, and where its beauties are seen to greater advantage. The best critics now agree in considering this unfinished work to be the picture which Leonardo was commissioned to paint in March, 1481, by the monks of S. Donato a Scopeto, outside the Porta Romana, for the high altar of their convent church.¹ A large number of sketches and studies for this painting are still in existence, and nothing is more likely than that some of these belong to the period when Sandro painted his *Adoration* for Gasparre Lami's altar. As Mr. Berenson has reminded us, in his chapter on Leonardo's drawings, in his recent work, all through his life Leonardo was in the habit of making drawings of any subject that was in his mind, whether he had received a commission for a work or not, and some of his studies for the *Last Supper* are said to have been executed fifteen years before the fresco itself. In 1476 Leonardo was still working with Verrocchio, and after that he lived in a house of his own in Florence until his departure for Milan in 1482, so that he no doubt still kept up close relations with his friend Sandro, and may well have helped him with his advice and suggestions when he painted this important work. In some points the *Adorations* of the two masters resemble each other

¹ "Leonardo da Vinci," Eugène Müntz, vol. i, p. 61.

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closely, in others they differ considerably. Perhaps the likeness of Leonardo's conception to that of Sandro is more marked in the preliminary studies than in the painting, especially in the drawing formerly in the Galichon collection, where the buildings in the background are almost the same.

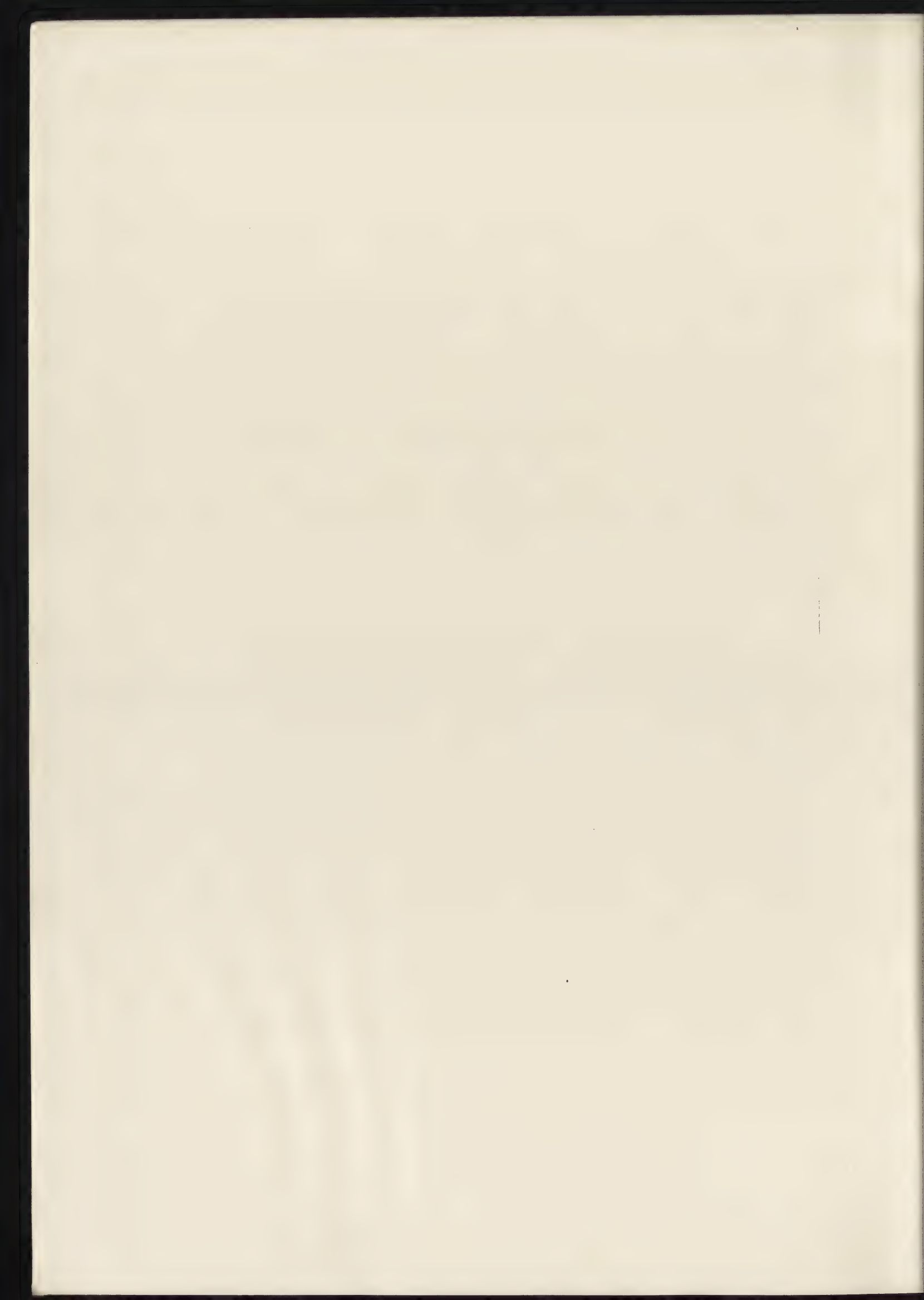
Both painters have abandoned the old traditional composition and placed the Virgin and Child in the centre of the picture; but while Sandro's *Holy Family* is raised high above the surrounding figures, Leonardo has improved upon this innovation by bringing his Virgin and Child into the more immediate foreground. Again, in the disposition of the groups there is a marked resemblance, especially in the position of the figures who are standing in the two corners of the picture, where the arc of the centre touches the ground. In both cases, as Mr. Berenson was the first to notice, the figure in the right-hand corner of the picture looks away from the central group towards the spectator, and alike in his gesture and in the folds of his robe we notice a curious resemblance.¹ There can be little doubt that in both cases this solitary figure represents the painter himself, and that as we recognize Sandro's features in the man in the orange cloak, so in the chivalrous youth clad in armour who looks out of Leonardo's picture, we see the great master himself in the flower of youth and beauty. The comparison is one which might be carried further, and is certainly full of interest. On the whole Leonardo's conception, as might be expected, shows greater freedom and charm, especially in the case of the Madonna and Child, who are distinctly superior to those of Botticelli. None the less, in scientific composition, in glorious beauty of colour, and in the masterly rendering of individual heads, the elder master's painting remains unique among works of the period. The warm praise which Vasari has bestowed upon this *Adoration* shows how highly it was esteemed by the next generation, and we can well believe that, as he tells us, the success of this important commission added greatly to the reputation which the painter had acquired both in the city itself and beyond the gates of Florence.

¹ "The Drawings of Florentine Painters," by Bernhard Berenson, vol. i, p. 153; "Leonardo da Vinci," by Georg Gronau, p. 91.



Houghton.

ADORATION OF THE MAGI.
Uffizi, Florence.



CHAPTER VII

1475—1478

Botticelli as a painter of classical myths.—Influence of the revival of learning in Art.—Introduction of pagan motives by Florentine painters.—Close relations between the scholars and poets of the Laurentian age.—Angelo Poliziano.—His poem of the *Giostra*.—Botticelli's *Allegory of Spring*.—Theories on the interpretation of this picture.—Connection of the subject with Poliziano's poem.—Classical allusions introduced.—Conspiracy of the Pazzi and Murder of Giuliano dei Medici.

AMONG the Florentine masters of his age Botticelli stands out as the foremost painter of classical myths, the man in whose art the enthusiasm for pagan antiquity, which was the ruling passion of Lorenzo's immediate circle, finds the fullest and most complete expression. This phase of Sandro's art has become of late years almost as popular as his religious paintings. On the one side we know him as the painter of Madonnas, on the other as the master of the *Venus* and the *Pallas*, the *Primavera* and the *Graces*. Since all the varying moods of the fickle world in which he lived were reflected in his work, it was natural that this, the strongest and most powerful influence of the times, should find a place there.

The classical revival which had permeated the literature of the Laurentian age was slowly gaining a hold on the art of the Quattrocento, and affecting both the sculpture and painting of Florence. Painting, indeed, had been so long exclusively dedicated to the service of the Church, that some time elapsed before the prevailing humanism of the day was able to turn its course into new channels. But by degrees the twofold forces of scientific realism and the study of classical models succeeded in transforming Art in all its manifold forms. The passion for building splendid palaces which distinguished not only the Medici but all the great families of Florence, afforded the decorative arts fresh scope for development, and supplied painters with a new field. Vasari tells us that Dello, an artist who flourished in the first half of the

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century, decorated *cassoni* with subjects from Greek and Roman history, and myths from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. And as a remarkably fine specimen of the artist's skill in this direction, he mentions the furniture of a whole room, which was decorated in this style for Cosimo dei Medici's son, Giovanni. The story of Paris, we learn, was among the subjects which Paolo Uccello painted in the Casa Medici. Donatello, we know, reproduced classical motives from antique gems, the legends of Ulysses and Pallas, of Bacchus and Ariadne, of Diomedes and the Palladium in the eight marble medallions with which he adorned the inner court of the palace, and the Pollaiuoli brothers painted their life-size figures of Hercules upon the walls of the same house.

The close intimacy that existed between the humanists and artists of Lorenzo's immediate circle produced rich fruit in this direction. Leo Battista Alberti, the brilliant and many-sided man who anticipated Leonardo in the marvellous versatility of his talents as writer, architect, sculptor, painter and musician, and who discoursed to Lorenzo and his companions on summer evenings in the woods of Camaldoli, lays it down as a fundamental principle that the artist should cultivate the society of poets and orators in order to draw inspiration from their eloquence. In his "Treatise on Painting"¹ the same writer gives the artist minute directions for the representation of pagan gods and heroes, Jupiter and Mars, Hercules and Antæus, Castor and Pollux, as if these themes were the only subjects worthy of the painter's serious attention. Already, when Alberti wrote, it is plain that the antique was rapidly becoming as much the fashion with painters and sculptors as with poets and men of letters. Alberti himself died in 1472, before Lorenzo had reigned in Florence for three years, and when Botticelli was still comparatively unknown. But his treatises on Architecture and Painting were, no doubt, introduced to Sandro's notice by one of the leading humanists of Lorenzo's court.

This was Angelo Ambrogini, generally known by the name of Poliziano, from the mountain-town of Montepulciano, where he was born in 1454. The distinguished humanist, who was so intimately connected with the Magnifico and his children, came to learn Greek and Latin at Florence as a friendless orphan, and in his poverty sought the

¹ "Della Pittura," ed. Bartoli, p. 338.

ANGELO POLIZIANO

help of this generous patron. At the age of sixteen he translated four books of the "Iliad" into Latin, and won the appellation of *Homericus juvenis* from the Florentine humanists. At eighteen he wrote his famous musical drama of "Orfeo" during a brief visit which he paid to Mantua with the young Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga in the summer of 1472. But his influence extended far beyond his own productions. When, a few years later, he became Professor of Greek and Latin, the power and eloquence of his genius attracted the most brilliant youths of Florence to his lectures. "His function was to inspire," writes one of the latest historians of the Renaissance, Sir Richard Jebb, "and his gifts were such that his brief span of life sufficed to render him one of the most influential personalities in the history of Italian humanism."¹

Sandro Botticelli was one of those who fell under the spell of the "Homeric youth," and caught the fire of his impassioned rhetoric. Like his august patron, Angelo Poliziano showed the keenest interest in art and artists. He edited Alberti's works, suggested the subject of *The Battle of the Centaurs and Lapithae* to the young Michelangelo for one of his first bas-reliefs, and composed Latin epitaphs for the monuments erected by Lorenzo to Giotto in the Duomo of Florence, and to Sandro's master, Fra Filippo Lippi, in the Cathedral of Spoleto. And, just as in later years, the young Raphael sought the help of the humanists of Urbino, of Bembo, and Bibbiena, and Castiglione, in the composition of his great Vatican frescoes, so now Botticelli found inspiration in the poems of the youthful Poliziano.

Whether Sandro was able to read the Latin poets for himself remains a doubtful question. Vasari, we know, tells a story of a neighbour whom the painter accused of holding the false opinions of Epicurus, and who in return charged Sandro with heresy, since *without learning* (*senza aver lettere*) and being hardly able to read, he ventured to write a commentary upon Dante. But whether we accept the literal truth of this statement or not, it is clear that Botticelli was familiar with the works of contemporary poets and with Italian renderings of classical authors. The very fact that Vasari describes him as a *persona sofistica*, seems to imply that he dabbled in philosophy and took part in the

¹ "The Cambridge Modern History." Vol. i, The Renaissance, p. 556.

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arguments and discussions that were so fashionable among the Platonists of the age. The verses of Lorenzo and Poliziano, the prose writings of Alberti, and the dialogues of Lucian were evidently well known to him. And deeply stirred as he was by the realities of the present, the idealism of his nature led him to take delight in romantic themes. His poetic and impressionable temperament was quick to respond to the influences in the air about him, and he felt as few other artists of his day could feel the charm of the old myths which had so powerful a fascination for the finest minds of the age.

Both Antonio Billi and the Anonimo tell us that Sandro painted many figures of nude women that were surpassingly beautiful. After giving us this information the last-named writer adds the following sentence:

"At Castello, in the house of Signor Giovanni dei Medici, he painted many pictures which are among his finest works."

Vasari, who wrote thirty or forty years after the Anonimo compiled his record, confirms this statement, and tells us that in his time two of these pictures by Sandro were still at Castello, a villa belonging to the Duke Cosimo. "One of them," he continues, "is a new-born Venus who is blown to the shore by the Loves and Zephyrs. The other is also a Venus, whom we see crowned with flowers by the Graces to represent the figure of Spring; and both of these the painter has represented with rare grace."

In this description we recognize the *Birth of Venus*, now in the Uffizi, and the *Allegory of Spring*, which is now in the Accademia. There is no mention of these paintings in the various inventories of the Magnifico's collections, and both the Anonimo and Vasari speak of them as belonging to the villa of Castello. This villa, the Anonimo informs us, was the house of Signor Giovanni dei Medici. This was none other than the famous Captain, popularly known as "Giovanni *delle bande nere*," John of the black bands, the only son of the valiant Madonna of Forli, Caterina Sforza, by her third marriage with the son of Lorenzo dei Medici's handsome cousin Giovanni. This gallant soldier was mortally wounded in a skirmish with the German forces under the Connétable de Bourbon and Frundsberg, then marching on Rome, and died, a few days afterwards, at Mantua in December, 1526. In Vasari's

LORENZO DI PIER FRANCESCO

days the villa of Castello was the property of Giovanni's son, Cosimo I, who had by this time risen to supreme power in Florence and had assumed the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany.

This double statement naturally leads us to conclude that Sandro's two great mythological pictures were originally painted for Lorenzo di Pier Francesco, the uncle of Giovanni *delle bande Nere*, and elder brother of that Giovanni who married Caterina Sforza. This youth was the grandson of Cosimo's only brother, Lorenzo, and the head of the younger branch of the house. His father, Pier Francesco, a partner in the Medici bank, and a loyal supporter of Piero il Gottoso and his sons, died in 1474, leaving him a large fortune, and the Magnifico was especially anxious to retain the friendship and support of this wealthy kinsman, who gave him financial assistance on more than one critical occasion. In 1478, when, after the Pazzi conspiracy, Lorenzo was in sore straits for lack of money, he mortgaged his estates at Mugello to his cousin, and betrothed his own daughter Luigia to Giovanni di Pier Francesco. The girl, however, died young, so that this plan for the union of the two branches of the family was frustrated. But the Magnifico employed his elder cousin on several important affairs of state, and sent him to France in 1483 as ambassador to Charles VIII, whose open supporter he afterwards declared himself, when that monarch entered Florence in 1494. But as long as the Magnifico lived, he had no cause to repent of the trust which he reposed in Lorenzo, and the most cordial relations were maintained between the cousins. Lorenzo di Pier Francesco was only two years younger than Giuliano dei Medici, and joined with zest in the jousts and hunting parties with which his cousins amused the gilded youth of Florence. At the same time he shared their literary tastes, wrote songs and Latin verses, and was a generous patron of scholars and artists. In the fine *Adoration of the Magi* which Sandro's pupil, Filippino Lippi painted for the monks of S. Donato in 1496, we may still see the portraits of the different members of this branch of the Medici family. Lorenzo is the dark man in the prime of life, wearing a red mantle. His brother, Giovanni, is the graceful, fair-haired youth in a long green cloak, bearing a gold casket in his hand, while in the gray-headed old King kneeling in the foreground we have the portrait of their father, Pier Francesco. Lorenzo's

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beautiful villa of Castello, on the heights above Careggi, commanded a splendid view over the valley of the Arno, and was renowned for the extent and loveliness of its gardens. Here Pier Francesco's son entertained the Magnifico and the other members of his family at many a sumptuous banquet, and held splendid festivities in honour of the distinguished guests who visited Florence. Sandro's old patrons, the Vespucci, were among his most intimate friends. Amerigo Vespucci, the great traveller, who was about his own age, took shelter at Lorenzo's villa of Trebbia in Val Mugello during the plague of 1476, and afterwards sent an account of his voyage to his old associate. Amerigo's niece, it is also worthy of note, who was born in this same year, received the name of Piera Francesca. Dr. Brockhaus, to whose researches we are indebted for this information, further remarks that the serpent worn by Simonetta in Piero di Cosimo's famous picture at Chantilly, was the device of Lorenzo di Pier Francesco, who may have employed the artist to paint this portrait of Marco Vespucci's young wife for his own benefit.¹ Angelo Poliziano was also intimately acquainted with Lorenzo, and dedicated the first of his "*Sylvae*," a poem in praise of Virgil, to this brilliant and accomplished youth, as well as an idyll on the rural charms of the Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano. Nothing was therefore more natural than that the Magnifico's rich and accomplished kinsman should wish to decorate his villa with mythological subjects painted by Sandro's hand on themes suggested by the verses of Poliziano.

In 1476 or 1477, the young humanist, who already stood so high in Lorenzo's favour, began to compose an epic poem in honour of Giuliano's tournament. As Luigi Pulci some years before had celebrated the Giostra di Lorenzo in a well-known poem, so Poliziano now abandoned his Homer to sing the arms and loves of the gallant Giuliano. The leading note of the epic is struck in the opening stanzas, in which the poet addresses Lorenzo as the laurel in whose shade Florence can rest in perfect security, and expresses a pious hope that some day he may have the happiness to sing the praise of Lorenzo's name and bear his renown from the Indies to the far ocean, from the Numidian shore to Boötes. But since the task is as yet beyond his strength, he will tune his lyre to another melody, and sing the prowess and the loves of the Magnifico's

¹ "*Forschungen über Florentinischer Kunstwerke*." H. Brockhaus.

POEM OF THE GIOSTRA

younger brother. In a series of idyllic scenes, the poet tells the story of Giuliano's loves. First of all, he describes "il bel Giulio," the brave and adventurous youth, whose life is spent in the pleasures of the chase and of study, who is devoted alike to the service of the Muses and Diana, despises women and lovers, and leads a free joyous life in the fields and the woods, while fair nymphs sigh for him in vain. Then he narrates the wiles by which Cupid, determined to avenge this slight, aims his arrow at the heart of the proud youth through the eyes of the beautiful Simonetta, and describes Giuliano's meeting with the lovely nymph in the solitary shades of the forest, and the dream in which she appears to him clad in the armour of Pallas. In a long digression Poliziano takes us to the court of Venus in the island of Cyprus and pictures the gates of the palace, adorned with reliefs of the Venus Anadyomene, the loves of Jupiter, Bacchus, Apollo, and other gods and heroes. There Cupid sings the glories of the house of Medici and returns to prepare Giuliano for the combat in which he is to win fresh laurels. But in his dream, Simonetta is suddenly withdrawn from his sight, in a thick cloud, and the hero, waking from sleep, invokes the help of Pallas and Cupid, and lifts his eyes to the sun, which is the emblem of glory.

Here, just as Giuliano is to enter on the Giostra which was to be the theme of his epic, the poet breaks off abruptly at the forty-sixth verse of the second book.¹ In all probability his task was interrupted by the terrible events of the conspiracy of the Pazzi and the murder of Giuliano, after which he never had the heart to resume his song, and the great epic remained unfinished. In this beautiful fragment, however, we have not only the finest of Poliziano's efforts in verse, but the source from which the painters of the Renaissance drew some of their fairest creations. Raphael derived his wonderful fresco of the *Triumph of Galatea* from this poem, and Botticelli found in it the theme of his loveliest pictures.

The exact significance of Sandro's famous *Allegory of Spring*, which the Anonimo and Vasari saw at the Medici villa of Castello, and which is now one of the chief ornaments of the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Florence, has been the subject of endless controversy. Some critics

¹ "Stanze di Angelo Poliziano." Libro primo e secondo. Ed. 1825.

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maintain that Botticelli owed his conception to the Latin poets, others are equally convinced that he was inspired by contemporary singers. Professor Warburg traces the origin of the composition to Poliziano's "Rusticus," a Latin poem in praise of spring-time, which he wrote at the Medici villa of Fiesole in 1483, and sees in the figure of the god Mercury, a reminiscence of an ode of Horace ("Carm.," I, 30), which had been recently translated by Zanobi Acciaiuoli.¹ Signor Supino considers Sandro's picture to be an illustration of Lorenzo dei Medici's "Selve d'Amore," while others are equally certain that he found his inspiration in the lines of Lucretius. Dr. Steinmann recognizes the portrait of Simonetta in the form of Venus and that of Giuliano in the figure of Mercury. Several authorities consider the scene represents Giuliano's first meeting with his mistress in the heart of the forest; one German writer, Herr Emil Jacobsen,² has framed an ingenious theory, according to which Botticelli here shows us the awakening of Simonetta in the Elysian fields. An Italian critic, Signor Marrai,³ carrying allegory still further, sees in the different figures emblems of the elemental forces and the powers of Nature renewing their life in the coming of Spring.

The best interpretation of Sandro's *Allegory*, we are convinced, is to regard it, in Signor Venturi's words, as a "painted epilogue of Poliziano's 'Giostra.'"⁴ The particular passage which the artist has chosen to illustrate is the poet's description of the realm of Venus and the coming of Spring. This description, which was one of the most admired portions of Poliziano's epic, he has followed in no servile spirit, adapting it freely to his own uses, and surrounding the creations of his fancy with imagery borrowed from other sources, whether Poliziano and Lorenzo's own verses or familiar passages from classical poets, Lucretius and Ovid. In the composition of his picture, there can be little doubt, Sandro benefited by the help and advice of Poliziano, who, as we have seen, took a lively interest in artistic matters, and was the intimate friend and companion of the Medici brothers and their kinsman, Lorenzo di Pier Francesco. It was, as we know, the habit of these Renaissance lords and ladies to employ the poets and scholars in their service to

¹ Warburg, "Sandro Botticelli, Geburt der Venus und Frühling."

² Jacobsen in "L'Arte," vol. ii, p. 484.

³ Marrai in "L'Arte," vol. i, p. 500.

⁴ "La Primavera nelle arti rappresentative," Adolfo Venturi. (Nuova Antologia, 1892.)



Houghton.

SPRING.
Accademia Fiorentina.



ALLEGORY OF SPRING

compose the paintings which artists were desired to execute for the decoration of their houses. Isabella d'Este invariably applied to some well-known humanist, such as Pietro Bembo or Paride da Ceresara, to supply Giovanni Bellini and Perugino with minute directions for the *Fantasie* which were to adorn the walls of her studio. In the same way, the members of the Medicean circle may well have sought advice from the brilliant young poet who early learnt to tune his lyre to courtly uses. Poliziano probably discussed all the details of the picture, which Sandro was to paint for the halls of Castello, with Lorenzo di Pier Francesco and his friends, while the Magnifico himself, as the leader of fashion and arbiter of taste in Florence, doubtless took an active part in the discussion.

The enchanted region where Venus reigns in the isle of the southern seas has been portrayed with exquisite charm by the painter. Here, in a forest glade, under a bower of orange trees laden with golden fruit, and surrounded by a luxuriant growth of myrtle, the Queen of Love holds her court. Tall and slender in form, but with a certain royal grace in her bearing, arrayed in robes of white and gold and carrying a red mantle on her arm, the goddess advances to welcome the coming of Spring, and invites her guest to enter with a gracious gesture. We see the beauteous Primavera, stepping lightly over the grassy sward, bearing a lapful of roses which she scatters before her as she goes. Her fair hair and graceful throat are wreathed with blue cornflowers and starry



Photograph—Houghton.]

VENUS FROM "SPRING"
(ACCADEMIA, FLORENCE)

SANDRO BOTTICELLI

daisies; her white robe is garlanded with long trails of fresh green ivy and briar roses, and patterned over with flowers of every hue. This is truly the nymph of whom Poliziano sings:

Ma lieta Primavera mai non mauca,
Che i suoi crin biendi e crespi all' aura spiega,
E mille fiori in ghirlandetta lega.¹



Photograph—Houghton.]

SPRING
(ACCADEMIÀ, FLORENCE)

And this, too, is the fair Simonetta who has conquered Giuliano's heart; the adored mistress whom the poet describes in the first book of the "Giostra":

Candida ella e candida la vesta,
Ma pur di rose e fior dipinta e d'erba.
Lo inanellato crin dell' aurea testa
Scende in la fronte umilmente superba . . .
Con lei sen va Onestate umile e piana,
Che d'ogni chiuso cor volge la chiave,
Con lei va Gentilezza in vista umana,
E da lei impara il dolce andar soave.²

Whatever may be the exact significance of this fair vision, Botticelli clearly borrowed all this imagery, the rippling hair of gold, and the white robe painted with roses and flowers of varied hue, from Poliziano's description of Simonetta, just as the emerald bough and golden fruit "of the bower of Venus and the green and flowery-meadowed and smiling

forest" are used as the setting for his *Primavera*:

Ride le attorno tutta la foresta.

The laughing nymph Flora, who follows closely on the steps of Spring, dropping rosebuds and anemones from her lips, as she flies from the embraces of Zephyr, the blue-robed god of the spring breezes, who

¹ "Stanze," i, 72.

² "Stanze," i, 43, 46.

ALLEGORY OF SPRING

tries to seize her in his arms, was no less evidently suggested by Poliziano's lines:

Ove tutte lascivo dietro a Flora
Zefiro vola, e la verde erba infiora.¹

Lorenzo employs the same image in his "Selve d'Amore":²

Vedrai ne regni suoi non più veduta
Gir Flora errando con le ninfe sue:
Il caro amante in braccio l'ha tenuta
Zefiro; e in sieme scherzan tutti e
due.

Both poets probably borrowed the image from the following passage of the Latin poet Lucretius:

It ver et Venus, et Veneris praenun-
tius ante
Pennatus graditur, Zephyri vestigia
propter
Flora quibus mater praespargens
ante viai
Cuncta coloribus egregiis et odoribus
opplet.

The group of three Graces who, clad in draperies of transparent gauze, dance on the dewy lawn, with hands linked together, was plainly suggested by Leon Battista Alberti, who in his "Treatise on Painting," mentions this subject immediately after his well-known description of the *Calumny of Apelles*, as having been often painted by the ancients and eminently adapted for treatment by modern artists. "What shall we say," he writes, "of these three youthful sisters, whom Hesiod names Aglaia, Euphrosyne and Thalia, and whom the ancients painted with laughing faces, holding each other's hands and adorned



Photograph—Houghton.]

THE THREE GRACES FROM "SPRING"
(ACCADEMIA, FLORENCE)

¹ "Stanze," i, 68.

² "Poesie di Lorenzo dei Medici," p. 184.

³ "Della Pittura," L. B. Alberti, p. 350.

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with loose and transparent robes? *Solutis Gratiae zonis* (Horace, "Carm.," I, 30). "They are supposed to be emblems of Liberality, because one sister gives, the second receives and the third gives back the gift, which conditions must be satisfied in all perfect liberality." Before them goes the god Mercury, whom Horace names in the Ode to which we have already referred,¹ as the herald of Venus and of the



Photograph—Houghton.]

ONE OF THE GRACES FROM "SPRING"
(ACCADEMIA, FLORENCE)

Graces; a stalwart youth, wearing a winged helmet on his thick black locks and red drapery round his strong limbs, who scatters the mists in the tree-tops, with the caduceus in his uplifted hand, all unconscious of the golden shaft which Cupid is aiming at his heart. The presence of the winged boy who, hovering in the air above the head of Venus, draws his bow to let off his shaft, recalls Poliziano's lines when, on the first meeting of "il bel Giulio" with Simonetta, Cupid secretly aims an arrow at the hero's heart:

Non s'accorge il meschin che quivi è
Amore.²

The introduction of this motive, as well as the resemblance of Botticelli's Mercury to the portraits of Giuliano dei Medici, afford fresh proofs that in Sandro's picture we have an illustration of Poliziano's "Giostra." As Signor Venturi remarks, this hypothesis is further supported by an old fifteenth-century engraving, which belongs to a "Rappresentazione" entitled *L'innamoramento di Galvano da Milano*.

¹ "Carm.," lib. i, 30.

² "Stanze," i, 41.

ALLEGORY OF SPRING

Here the mistress of Galvano appears as the nymph of Spring with her hands full of flowers, while Cupid hovering above her head is in the act of aiming a dart at her lover's heart.¹

All the leading features of Botticelli's early works are present in this picture. The tall, slender forms and light, clinging draperies of the dancing maidens recall Fra Filippo's angels. The rich gold embroideries which adorn the white robe of Venus, and the pearls in her fair tresses, display the love of ornament which he had learnt in the workshop of the goldsmith-painters. The influence of the Pollaiuoli is still marked in the careful drawing of the nude in the limbs and attitude of Mercury, as well as in the exaggerated curve of the hip which is common to all Sandro's early figures, and is especially noticeable in the *Fortezza* and the *Pallas*. At the same time, there is a distinct advance in freedom of style and individuality of character. In the features of the Graces, in the rhythmical movement of their dance, in their wavy locks and wistful eyes, we already recognize Botticelli's favourite types, the forms and expression which are especially associated with his art, while the smile on the face of Spring has the subtle charm that haunts his friend Leonardo's creations. The sense of air and motion that pervades the picture, the swift action of the god Zephyr, the fluttering garments of Spring, are all highly characteristic. Both in these details and in the varied treatment of the locks of Flora and the Graces we have another proof of his familiarity with Alberti's treatise. After discoursing of the manner in which the passions of the soul are expressed in the movements of the body, Leon Battista proceeds to treat of the motions of inanimate objects. "And since the delineation of movement of hair and locks, of stems of trees and branches, and of drapery in pictures adds greatly to their charm, I should certainly wish that hair should be represented in the following different ways: Sometimes it twists in a circle, forming a knot, at other times it flows on the air, imitating flames; now it curls downwards under other locks, now it is lifted upwards in one direction or another. In the same way, the branches grow upwards and fall back, partly towards the stem, and are partly twisted in the shape of coils of rope. And the same thing may be seen in draperies; as, from the trunk of one tree, many branches are born, so from one fold many other folds

¹ Signor A. Venturi in "La Nuova Antologia," vol. 123, p. 47.

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are born, and in these folds of drapery all these different movements are seen, so that there is no fold of drapery in which almost all these movements are not to be found. But let these movements, as I always repeat, be gentle and moderate, and set forth the grace rather than the difficulties of art."¹ Sandro had evidently studied Alberti's book attentively and profited largely by his advice, in this and in his later pictures. But what strikes us most of all in his *Primavera* is that new-born joy in the gladness of spring and the beauty of Nature, which speaks in each delicate bud and tender leaf, and which makes this picture so perfect an image of the delicious May-time which Lorenzo and his companions were never tired of praising in their songs. The old classical myth appears blended with the new spirit and is transfigured by the poet's fancy into a faery dream of the young Renaissance:

Ben venga Maggio
E 'l gonfalon selvaggio.
Ben venga Primavera,
Ch' ognun par che innamorì;
E voi donzelle a schiera
Con li vostri amadori,
Che di rose e di fiori
Vi fate belle il Maggio.
Venite alla frescura
Delli verdi arbuscelli:
Ogni bella è sicura
Fra tanti damigelli;
Che le fiere, e gli' uccelli
Ardon d' amor il Maggio.
Che è giovane, e bella,
Deli non sie punto acerba
Che non si rinnovella
L'età come fa l'herba,
Nessuna sia superba
All' amadore il maggio.²

Even to-day, when time and neglect have darkened the soft blue of the sky and the glossy verdure of myrtle and orange leaves, and dimmed the bright hues of flowers and fruits, Sandro's *Primavera* remains one of the most radiant visions that has ever dawned on the soul of a poet-painter. How much more must the loveliness of the young Florentine master's painting have called forth the admiration of the humanists who

¹ L. B. Alberti, "Della Pittura," vol. ii, p. 344.

² Lorenzo dei Medici, "Poesie Canzone a ballo."



Houghton.

THE THREE GRACES.
Accademia, Florence.





Houghton.

ONE OF THE GRACES.
Accademia, Floren.c.



ALLEGORY OF SPRING

met that joyous spring-time in the fair gardens of Castello! But a tragic doom hung over these dreams of youth and love:

Quant' è bella giovinezza
Che si fugge tuttavia!
Chi vuol esser lieto, sia,
Di doman non c' è certezza.¹

So, in the words of Lorenzo's Carnival hymn, sang the chorus of youths in Greek costumes, as the pageant of Bacchus and Ariadne was borne on a triumphal car from the doors of the Medici palace, while troops of white-robed maidens, crowned with flowers, danced merrily on the Piazza di Santa Trinità and mingled their songs with the voices of the young men, to the music of viols and flutes. Giuliano himself joined in the mirth, and the Magnifico, with Poliziano at his side, looked on from the steps of his house at the corner, as the gay revellers passed before him in procession, all unmindful of the prophetic ring in the light refrain of their song, telling them how soon youth and joy must pass away. Within a year of Giuliano's triumphal Tournament, the "bella Simonetta" was no more, and exactly two years later, before Poliziano had finished the second book of his "Giostra," Giuliano himself, the darling of the Florentines, was murdered by the Pazzi conspirators on Sunday, the 26th of April, 1478. Poliziano broke off his poem to tell in sterner prose the dark story of the plot that brought his hero's life to this sharp and sudden close, and Sandro turned from painting visions of beautiful nymphs and the joyous spring-time, to record the names and effigies of the traitors, on the walls of the Palazzo Pubblico.

¹ Lorenzo dei Medici, "Trionfo di Bacco e Arianna:" Poesie, p. 421.

CHAPTER VIII

1478—1480

Conspiracy of the Pazzi.—Punishment of the conspirators.—Botticelli is employed by the Signory to paint their effigies on the Palazzo Pubblico.—Lorenzo's visit to Naples.—*Pallas and the Centaur*.—Allegorical meaning of the picture.—The *Birth of Venus* in the Uffizi.—Poliziano's description in the Giostra.—*Mars and Venus* in the National Gallery.—Dr. Richter's interpretation of this composition.

THE conspiracy of the Pazzi sent a thrill of horror through Florence. The plot had been hatched in Rome by the Pope's nephew Girolamo Riario, and Francesco Pazzi. Another kinsman of his Holiness, the young Cardinal Raffaele Riario, a boy of sixteen, was present as the honoured guest of the Medici brothers and was with them in the Duomo at Mass, when the bloody deed was done. The Archbishop of Pisa, Francesco Salviati, took an active part in the conspiracy, and the Pazzi family was closely connected with the rival house of Medici, Guglielmo dei Pazzi being the husband of Lorenzo's sister Bianca. Two priests actually made the attempt upon Lorenzo's life, and to crown all, the murder took place at the most solemn moment of the mass. Giuliano fell dead on the steps of the choir, pierced with nineteen wounds by the daggers of the traitors. One of them, Francesco Pazzi, was conversing in the most familiar manner with him, as they walked up the nave of the great church together, and threw his arm round the waist of the murdered man, to ascertain that he wore no armour under his doublet. Lorenzo himself narrowly escaped the same fate, and was only saved by his own presence of mind and the courage and devotion of his friends. One of them, Francesco Nori, was stabbed through the heart in his efforts to save the Magnifico's life, and the assassin's dagger grazed Lorenzo's neck as, running in front of the high altar, he took refuge in the Sacristy, where Poliziano and his companions closed Luca della Robbia's bronze doors in the face of his pursuers. The holiest places of the Duomo ran with blood. "Nothing

PAZZI CONSPIRATORS

but noise and shouting," wrote an eye-witness, Filippo Strozzi, "could be heard in the church. A general panic seized all who were present. One fled here, the other there," while the terror-stricken boy Cardinal clung to the steps of the altar and protested his innocence.

But the Florentines rallied loyally round Lorenzo, and crowds surrounded the palace to which he had been borne in safety with shouts of "Palle, palle!" Giuliano's murder was avenged with terrible promptitude. Francesco Pazzi, the Archbishop of Pisa, and two of his kinsmen were hung that very day from the windows of the Palazzo Pubblico. Jacopo Pazzi, the head of the family, managed to escape from the city, but was caught hiding in the neighbourhood and given up to justice by a young peasant, and was hanged, together with his brother Renato. The guilty priests were discovered hidden in the Badia and dragged out to torture and death. Bernardo Bandini Baroncelli, who was Giuliano's actual assassin, escaped to Constantinople, but was surrendered a year later by order of the Sultan, and was hanged from the Palazzo. "He was a bad, bold man," writes Poliziano, "who knew no fear, and was mixed up in every kind of wickedness. And he was the first who stabbed Giuliano in the heart with a dagger. Then not content with having murdered Giuliano, he hurried towards Lorenzo, who was able to escape into the Sacristy with a few followers, upon which Bandini ran his sword through Francesco Nori, an able man who was one of the Medici's chief agents." More than seventy victims, among whom were several innocent kinsmen and servants of the Pazzi, were put to death in all, and the walls of the Palazzo were lined with corpses.

It was then that Sandro Botticelli was employed by the Signory to paint the effigies of the chief conspirators upon the exterior of the palace walls. "In 1478," writes the Anonimo Gaddiano, "on the façade where was the Bargello, above the Dogana, he painted Messer Jacopo, Francesco and Renato dei Pazzi, and Monsignor Francesco Salviati, Archbishop of Pisa, and two Jacopo Salviatis, one the brother, the other the kinsman of the said Messer Francesco, and Bernardo Bandini, hung by the neck, and Napoleone Francesi, hung by one foot, who all conspired against Giuliano and Lorenzo dei Medici. And at the foot of their effigies Lorenzo placed epitaphs, and the one on Bandini runs thus:

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Son Bernardo Bandini, un nuovo Giuda.
Traditore micidiale a chiesa io fui.
Ribello per aspettare morte più cruda.

This description of Bandini, as a traitor and murderer in church, shows how much the horror of the crime was heightened by the fact that it was perpetrated in the sanctuary. Napoleone Francesi, whom Sandro painted, the Anonimo tells us, hanging by one foot, was represented in this manner, because he alone among the conspirators succeeded in escaping safely, and, more fortunate than Bandini, was never captured.

The selection of Sandro for this office is another proof of his close connection with the Medici and of the high favour in which he stood with Lorenzo at this period. The Council of Outlawry, from whom he received the commission, paid him forty gold florins for executing the task in the month of July, 1478, so that we may conclude he spent about two months on the work. According to Vasari, who, however, ascribes the painting of the effigies of the Pazzi conspirators to Andrea del Castagno, the work was executed in a marvellous manner. "It would indeed be impossible," he writes, "to describe the art and judgement which was shown in the personages here portrayed mostly taken from life and hung in strange attitudes of the most varied and beautiful description."¹

Another curious thing which may be mentioned, in connection with this grim task that was assigned to Botticelli, is that his friend Leonardo has left us a drawing of Bandini's execution,² which was taken on the 29th of December, 1479, when the criminal was hanged, after being given up by the Sultan. The keen interest and close attention with which the artist has followed the death-agony of the wretched criminal, is characteristic of the master who used to attend executions and dissect corpses in Milan. The body, in its loose garments, is seen hanging at the end of a rope with the head bent forward, the arms tied behind the back, and in the margin of the framing we read the following notes describing Bandini's clothes: "Small tan-coloured cap, black satin doublet, blue mantle lined with fox, black hose." These details seem

¹ Vasari, ed. Milanesi, vol. iii.

² This drawing is now in M. Bonnat's collection, and is reproduced in M. Müntz's "Leonardo da Vinci," vol. i, p. 53.



Houghton.

PALLAS.
Palazzo Pitti.



LORENZO'S RETURN FROM NAPLES

to imply that the drawing, which is now in M. Bonnat's collection, originally served as a sketch for a more important work. Perhaps Leonardo may have been employed to paint the effigy of Bandini, by the side of the conspirators whom Botticelli had already depicted on the walls of the Bargello.

During the troubled times that followed the death of Giuliano and the rising of the Pazzi, we hear of no more commissions for pictures. Florence was threatened by enemies on every side, and all Lorenzo's courage and diplomacy were needed to suppress factions at home, and to avert the open and covert attacks by which Pope Sixtus endeavoured to effect his downfall. But when this critical moment in his career was over, and the security of the State and his own supremacy was assured, the Magnifico once more employed Sandro to work for him.

In the spring of 1480, Lorenzo returned in safety from his perilous mission to the court of Naples. This bold step had been crowned with complete success. After three months' parleying, King Ferrante had finally signed a treaty with the Florentine republic, and Lorenzo was able to set sail for Pisa, taking with him as a parting gift from the old king, a fine horse which he received with the remark "that a messenger of joyful news ought to be well mounted." When he reached Florence he met with the most enthusiastic reception. "The whole city," writes Guicciardini, "went out to welcome him, and hailed his coming with the greatest joy, since he brought with him peace and the assurance of the preservation of the State."¹ His faithful friend Poliziano celebrated the occasion in a new poem, expressing his joy at the sight of Lorenzo's face and his longing to clasp his right hand and bid him welcome to his home:

O ego quam cupio reducis contingere dextram
Laurenti! et laeto dicere laetus, Ave!

The poet gives an animated account of the scene that day at the palace of Via Larga, of the crowds which filled the halls and of his own vain endeavour to press through the joyful throng and salute the hero of the hour, whom he sees from afar, with smiling countenance, greeting his friends and thanking them with words and smiles and hands. But since he cannot greet him in person, he sends Lorenzo his

¹ "Storia Fiorentina," p. 109.

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verses to hail him on this auspicious day and bear witness to his servant's love and joy:

Ite mei versus, Medicique haec dicite nostro,
Angelus hoc mittit Politianus, Ave!

It was then that the Magnifico, desirous to commemorate the restoration of peace and his own triumphant return, employed Botticelli to paint the famous picture of *Pallas subduing the Centaur*, which was discovered some ten years ago, in a dark corner of the Pitti Palace. The only mention of this painting in contemporary records is to be found in an inventory of the contents of the palace in Via Larga that was taken on the 7th of October, 1516. Six months before that date Giuliano dei Medici, the Magnifico's son, had died at Fiesole. His only surviving brother, Giovanni, was the reigning Pope, Leo X, and his nephew, Piero's son Lorenzo, had been proclaimed Duke of Urbino. The only Medici left in Florence, were the representatives of the younger branch of the house, Piero, the son of Botticelli's patron, Lorenzo di Piero Francesco, and his first cousin, Giovanni *delle bande nere*, the son of Caterina Sforza. A division of the family property was made between them, and in the list of pictures here mentioned we find the following entry:

"In the second room on the ground floor, a figure of *Minerva and a Centaur*."

In another inventory, taken at a slightly later date, this entry is repeated as follows:

"In the second room, by the side of the hall on the ground floor, a *Minerva and Centaur* on canvas, with a panel behind it."

This description is perfectly accurate, and the newly-discovered picture now in the Pitti Palace is painted on canvas, which Botticelli also employed for his *Birth of Venus* in the Uffizi, a work probably executed about the same time. The *Pallas* passed into the Pitti Gallery together with most of the Grand Ducal collection, towards the end of the eighteenth century, and was engraved in Frassinetti's "*Galleria Pitti illustrata*," published in 1842. The editor of that work describes the work in question as an "An Allegory by Sandro Botticelli," which seemed to be connected with Lorenzo il Magnifico, since it bore his device of the triple ring, but the exact significance of which it was



Houghton.

PALLAS AND THE CENTAUR.
Palazzo Pitti, Florence.

PALLAS AND THE CENTAUR

impossible to explain. Fourteen years later, on the marriage of the Archduke Ferdinand of Lorraine, some alterations were made in the Pitti Gallery, and Botticelli's *Pallas* was removed with some other pictures to a storeroom in the palace, where its very existence was forgotten. It was only in 1895, that an English connoisseur, Mr. Spence, who happened to be paying a visit to the Duke of Aosta, caught sight of the *Pallas* in a dark ante-room of the private apartments reserved for royal use, and recognized it as a work of Botticelli.

Although this painting is not mentioned by Vasari or any contemporary writer of the Laurentian age, it is clear that we have here an allegory of Lorenzo dei Medici's victory over his enemies, and the establishment of his wise and beneficent rule. As Poliziano's courtly verse records the most glorious moment in the Magnifico's life, so Botticelli's painting remains a lasting memorial of Lorenzo's triumph and the disastrous fate of the Pazzi conspirators. Art and poetry had already associated the goddess Pallas with the house of Medici. The muse of Poliziano and the brush of Sandro had taught the Florentines to see in the Greek goddess the protectress of Lorenzo and Giuliano, and the guardian of their family. On the other hand, the Centaur had been held to be the symbol of political strife and disorder since the days of Plutarch. Giotto introduces a Centaur as a type of rebellion and crime into his fresco of *Obedience* at Assisi, and Dante speaks of the Centaurs as accursed creatures in his "Purgatorio."¹

In this case, the Centaur not only appears as a common emblem of crime and folly, but fitly represents the Pazzi, whose name literally signifies "fools."

Nothing can be simpler than the composition. Pallas, a tall and stately figure, bearing the Medusa shield on her back, and armed with a massive halberd, stands before us as if she had just alighted upon the earth, and seizes the Centaur by the forelock. Her white robe is embroidered with the triple diamond ring that was the favourite device of the Medici, and the graceful olive bough wreathed about her brows and trailing over her breast and arms, are symbols of the good tidings of peace which Lorenzo had brought back with him from Naples. This Centaur with the shaggy locks reminds us of the painting by the Greek

¹ "Purgatorio," xxiv, 120.

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artist Zeuxis, which Lucian describes. But he is no monster of vice and ugliness. On the contrary, his venerable figure and aged face seem to plead for mercy, as he cowers before this triumphant daughter of the gods, who looks down upon her captive in all the might of divine youth and beauty. Behind her we catch a glimpse of distant hills and seas, that may be intended to represent the Bay of Naples, with the

ship which bore Lorenzo homewards sailing across its waters.

Both the types and general style of the picture confirm the supposition that it was painted in the year 1480, some time after the *Primavera*, but certainly before the *Birth of Venus*. The figure of Pallas resembles the Fortezza and the figure of Venus in the *Allegory of Spring*. But although her form still retains the prominent curve of the line of hip, which is a curious feature of Sandro's early frescoes, the signs of the Pollaiuoli's influence are less marked than in these last-named works. The



Photograph—Houghton.]

PALLAS
(PALAZZO PITTI)

gentle, half-pitying expression on the face of Pallas, and the decorative pattern of the olive foliage, are full of charm, and the painter's scheme of colour is nowhere more pleasing and harmonious than in this composition. The mantle falling over the white robes of the goddess is of a rich green; the sandals on her feet are of orange hue, and her bright locks of red-gold stream on the breeze, in the soft, rippling waves commended by Alberti. On the left, a mass of gray shelving rocks represents the cavern which is the Centaur's home, and forms a striking

BIRTH OF VENUS

background to the group. So the painter once more proved that poetic imagination can gild the dullest theme with light, and transform even a political cartoon into a dream of beauty.

We have neither historical information nor documentary evidence to guide us in determining the precise date of the two other mythical subjects by Sandro's hand, which are still in existence. One is the *Birth of Venus* which Vasari mentions, together with the *Primavera*, as being in the Grand Duke Cosimo's villa of Castello, and which came with the Grand Ducal collection into the Uffizi. The other is the long, narrow panel which goes by the name of *Mars and Venus* in the National Gallery.

The subject of the former picture, as we have already seen in the case of the *Primavera*, was evidently derived from Poliziano's poem of Giuliano's Giostra. In a passage adapted from one of the Homeric hymns, the poet describes the birth of Venus. Among the sculptured reliefs which adorned the portals of the palace of Venus in the enchanted isle of Cyprus, he sees the new-born Aphrodite, a maiden with a divine face, gently wafted by the soft breath of the Zephyr on the white foam of the Aegean waves, towards the flowery shore:

Vera la schiuma e vero il mar direste,
E vero il nicchio e ver soffiâr di venti,
La Dea negli occhi sfolgorar vedreste;
E 'l ciel riderle a torno e gli elementi:
L'Ore premer l'arena in bianche vesti;
L'aura increspar li crin distesi e lenti.¹

Heaven and earth, the poet sings, rejoice at the coming of this daughter of the Gods. The white-robed Hours wait to welcome her and spread a star-sown robe over her ivory limbs, and countless flowers spring up along the shore where her feet will tread. All of this exquisite imagery is faithfully reproduced in Sandro's painting. He represents his *Venus Anadyomene* laying one hand on her snowy breast, the other on her loose tresses of yellow hair—a form of virginal beauty and purity, as, with her feet resting on the golden-tipped shell, she glides softly over the rippling surface of the waves. He paints the shower of single roses fluttering about her form, and the winged Zephyrs clad in garments of pale mauve and green, and linked fast together as they hover in the

¹ Poliziano, "Stanze," i, 100.

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air above, and waft the goddess to the shore of love. Following another of Alberti's suggestions, Botticelli introduces the actual "faces of Zephyr and Auster, appearing out of the clouds, in the opposite side of the picture, and blowing on the figures in such a manner that their draperies shall take beautiful folds in the breeze."¹ After his wont, Sandro simplifies the composition, and in the place of the three Hours, mentioned in Homers' hymn, and in Poliziano's "Stanze," he shows us one fair damsel, the nymph of spring, wearing a white robe, embroidered with blue cornflowers, and girdled with convolvulus and roses, who springs forward with light and elastic step to offer Venus a pink mantle sown with daisies. In the laurel-groves that grow along the shore and spread out their boughs to shelter the new-born Aphrodite, we have, no doubt, a courtly allusion to Lorenzo's name. In the dedication of the "Stanze" Poliziano addresses his patron as the laurel under whose shade Florence can rest safely:

E tu ben nato Laur' sotto il cui velo
Fiorenza lieta in pace si riposa.²

and he speaks of him elsewhere as the "laurel-tree who sheltered the song-birds who carolled in the Tuscan spring."

The sense of light and airy movement is wonderfully given in wind-blown draperies and fluttering roses, in rippling waves and tossing locks that would have delighted the heart of Alberti, in the light and springing footstep and glad gesture of the nymph of Spring, in the gliding motion of Venus herself. Sandro never fashioned a fairer or more delicate form than this Goddess of love, whose ivory limbs may well have been modelled, as tradition says, from some antique marble among the statues of the Medici gardens. Some critics, indeed, have suggested that Botticelli borrowed the attitude of his goddess from the famous little statue known as the Medici Venus. Dr. Julius Meyer, with more probability, thinks that he found his model in another classical statue, which Benvenuto Rambaldi saw when he paid a visit to Florence, a hundred years before, and which, according to his description, agrees exactly in form and pose with the Venus of Sandro's picture. But the wan face of the goddess with her mournful air and sad, wistful eyes, is unlike any Greek or Roman image of the Heaven-

¹ "Della Pittura," lib. ii, p. 344.

² "Stanze," i, 4.



Houghton.

THE BIRTH OF VENUS.
Uffizi, Florence.



BIRTH OF VENUS

born Queen of Cnidus and Paphos. All the sorrow of the modern world is there, the strange note of unsatisfied yearning which this painter of the Laurentian age has made peculiarly his own, and which appeals with a singular power to the children of the present day. This impression is heightened by the absence of sun, and the cold gray morning light that is slowly stealing over the distant bays and headlands of the landscape, and the long reaches of silent sea. We know not where Sandro caught this mediaeval note which blends so strangely with the bright myth of the old Greek world; but we feel there is no mere affectation in his melancholy, which finds expression both in his sacred and in his secular works, in his Madonnas and Angels as well as in his nymphs and muses. It may have been only the natural utterance of that sadness which seems to be the common heritage of the poetic temperament—the sense of tears in mortal things; or it may be the reflection of that sorrowful consciousness of the uncertainty of life, of human love and coming death, which threw its shadow over the gay festivals of those Renaissance days, and haunted Lorenzo's own songs with a mournful echo:

Di doman non c'è certezza.

In this picture of the *Birth of Venus*, the painter, we realize, has taken a new step in advance, and having freed himself altogether from the influence of other masters, henceforth relies entirely upon his own



Photograph—Houghton.

VENUS

(FROM THE "BIRTH OF VENUS," UFFIZI)

SANDRO BOTTICELLI

resources. The stiffness and rigidity of his early works have given way to perfect ease and grace, the old defects and difficulties have been overcome, and Botticelli has attained to a beauty of line and a decorative completeness such as has been rarely surpassed by any other artist.

The other classical subject which Sandro painted about the same time, that is to say, soon after the canvas of *Pallas subduing the Centaur*, and before his journey to Rome, in the beginning of 1481, is the painting entitled *Mars and Venus* (No. 915 in the National Gallery). This long narrow panel was probably originally intended to adorn the top of a doorway in one of the Medici palaces or villas, and remained



Photograph—Valentine and Sons.]

MARS AND VENUS
(NATIONAL GALLERY)

in Florence until it came to England in the Barker collection some fifty years ago. At the sale of that collection, in 1874, it was bought by the trustees of the National Gallery, acting under the advice of the newly-appointed director, Sir Frederic Burton. The Loves of Mars and Venus was a favourite theme both with Renaissance poets and painters, and is the title of one of those curious dramatic compositions which Lorenzo wrote, and which were performed on festive occasions by his own children. It consists of four monologues spoken in turn by Venus, Mars, Apollo and Vulcan, and contains some of Lorenzo's best and sweetest verse. The old story is also introduced by Poliziano in a well-known passage of his "Stanze" (Libro I, 122), where Cupid, on return-

MARS AND VENUS

ing to his mother's palace in Cyprus, finds Venus reclining on a couch with Mars in her lap, surrounded by a troop of joyous little Loves, who shower roses over the lovers:

Trovolla assisa in letto fuor del lembo,
Pur mo di Marte sciolta delle braccia
Il qual rovescio le giaceva in grembo,
Pascendo gli occhi pur della sua faccia.

The attitude of Venus in Sandro's picture certainly recalls these lines, which may well have supplied the painter with his theme. On the other hand, the close connection that exists between this painting and another passage of the same poem, has led Dr. Richter to suggest a different interpretation of the subject.¹ In the second book, the poet describes the dream which Venus sends to Giuliano in his sleep. His fair mistress, Simonetta, appears to him wearing the armour of Pallas, and Cupid, whispering in his ear, tells him that the goddess will give him the victory in the Tournament, and that when the fight is over, his love will lay down her arms and be given back to him clad in her old white robe. In the broad-chested, strong-limbed young man, with the olive skin and the thick curly locks, whom Sandro represents slumbering with his head drowsily sunk back on the flowery sward, Dr. Richter suggests we have "il bel Giulio" himself, the mighty hunter who sleeps in the cool shade of the myrtle bowers, dreaming of his beloved. Here, too, according to the same critic, is the lady of his love, who, clad in a white gold-braided robe, and resting her arm on a crimson pillow, sits up erect and grave, watching the sleeping warrior with an air of contented repose on her face. The careful arrangement of the fair nymph's curled and plaited locks, her life-like and expressive features, have led Dr. Richter to suggest that we have here a portrait of Simonetta robed in the *bianca gonna* ready to meet the eyes of her lover when he wakes out of sleep. Meanwhile three merry little goat-footed Loves play with his lance and helmet, and one mischievous boy blows through a shell into the slumbering hero's ear, while another laughing child peeps out from under his arm without apparently producing the least effect. These sportive children do not belong to Poliziano's epic, but were evidently suggested by a passage in which Lucian describes a picture of the

¹ "Lectures on the National Gallery," by Dr. J. P. Richter, p. 55.

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Marriage of Alexander by the painter Aëtion.¹ This Greek poet, whose minute and critical account of works of art was very popular with the Florentine humanists of the Renaissance, describes the three little Cupids bending down under the weight of Alexander's spear, and tells how one of these has slyly slipped his head into the breast-plate lying on the ground, exactly as Sandro has painted them.

Whatever the correct interpretation of the subject may be, we have without doubt, in the National Gallery panel, one of the finest and most highly-finished of Botticelli's works. There can be no question as to the rare decorative charm of the design, or the incomparable beauty of line that is revealed in living forms and flowing draperies. The nude limbs of the sleeping warrior and soft roundness of the baby forms and faces are admirably modelled. The rich colouring of the crimson cushion and gold-chased armour, the snowy whiteness of the nymph's robes, are set off by the dark-green foliage of the myrtle bower and the delicate tints of the sky and sea that appear in the distance.

The companion panel to this picture in the National Gallery (No. 916), a Venus or Simonetta reclining on a couch, while three *Amorini* play at her feet with bunches of grapes and red and white roses, was also acquired for the nation at the Barker sale, and still bears the name of Botticelli, but is evidently an inferior work by a scholar's hand. The best authorities now recognize it as the work of Jacopo del Sellajo, one of Sandro's most skilful and industrious assistants, who executed most of the similar compositions in the Louvre and other galleries.²

The Bacchus, lifting a cup to his lips with both hands, which Vasari saw in the Medici palace and describes as a very beautiful figure, has unfortunately disappeared, and we can only hope that, like the long lost *Pallas*, it may once more be brought to light by some unexpected stroke of fortune.

¹ Lucian "Herodotus, Opera 4," ed. Jacobitz, 1887. See also Count Plunkett, "Sandro Botticelli," p. 44.

² Mary Logan, "Revue Archéologique," 1900.

CHAPTER IX

1480—1481

Botticelli paints a fresco of *St. Augustine* in Ognissanti.—Ghirlandajo's *St. Jerome*.—Income-tax paper of 1480.—Sandro's family affairs.—Botticelli invited to Rome by Pope Sixtus IV.—The *Adoration of the Magi* at St. Petersburg.—The Sistine Chapel.—Tuscan and Umbrian masters engaged by Giovannino dei Dolci to decorate the Papal Chapel.—Date of the frescoes of the Sistine.—Terms of the contract.—Assistants employed by these painters.

IN 1480, the year in which Botticelli painted his *Pallas and the Centaur* to commemorate Lorenzo's safe return from Naples, he was employed by Giorgio Antonio Vespucci to paint a fresco of *St. Augustine* in the church of Ognissanti. The Vespucci, as we know, were among Botticelli's earliest patrons, and this member of the family was distinguished for his learning and piety. He took orders about this time and was made a Canon of Santa Maria del Fiore in 1482. Fifteen years later, during the revival of Savonarola, Giorgio Antonio joined the Dominican order, and, like Botticelli himself, became one of the Prior of San Marco's most devoted followers. Ognissanti was the parish church of the Vespucci, where, a few short years before, la bella Simonetta had been laid to rest, and where Sandro's own family had their burial-place. In this ancient shrine he was now called to paint a fresco of this great Father of the Western Church, for whom he seems to have had an especial devotion, and whose figure appears in several of his later works.

"On this occasion," writes Vasari, "Sandro put forth his greatest powers in order that he might surpass all his contemporaries, but especially Domenico Ghirlandajo, who had painted a figure of St. Jerome on the opposite wall. This work proved worthy of the highest praise, and in the head of this Saint the painter succeeded in showing that profound depth and acuteness of intellect which marks those wise and thoughtful men who are continually engaged in the study of lofty and difficult subjects."

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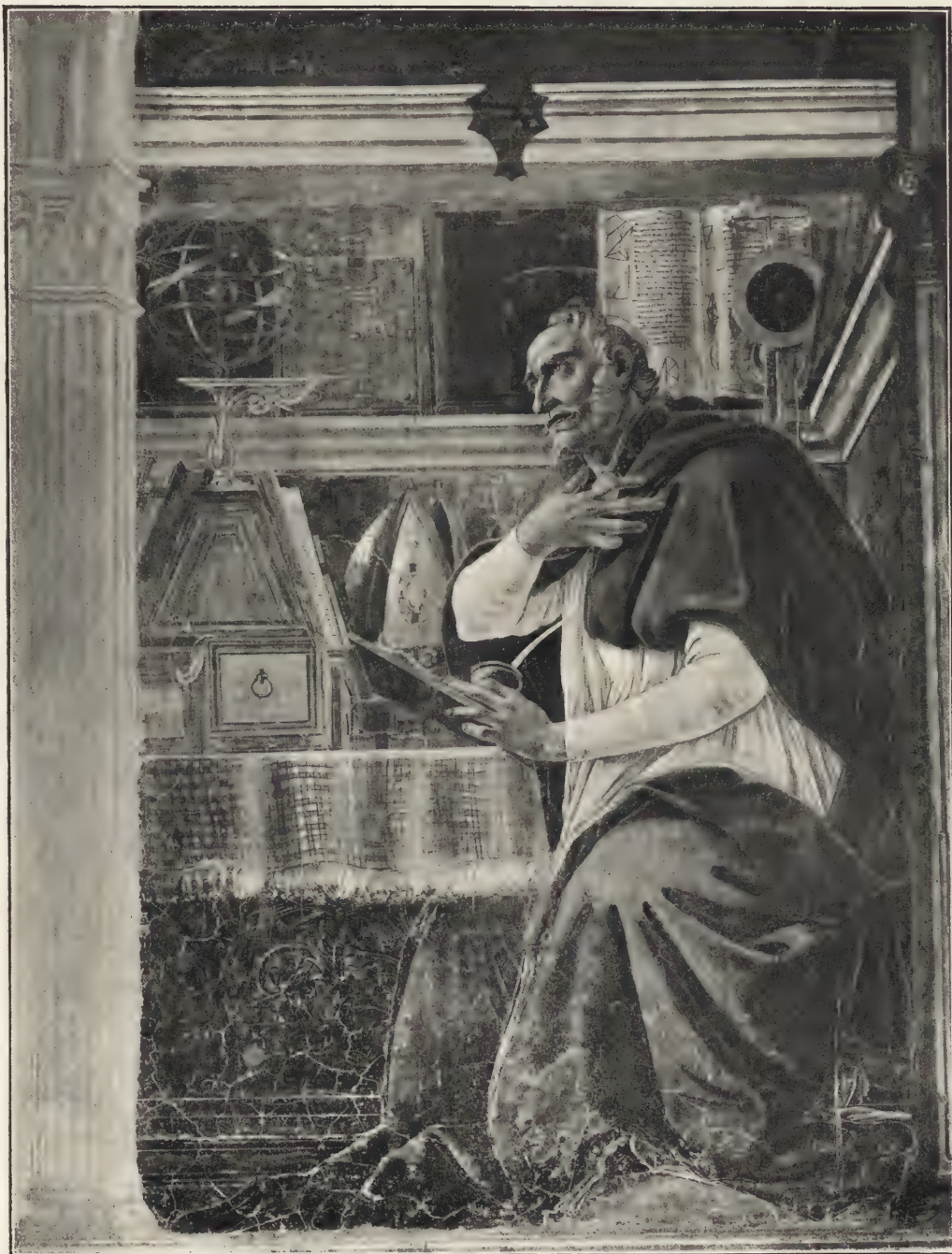
Ghirlandajo, to whom Vasari here alludes, was throughout his life Botticelli's chief rival among contemporary painters. Gifted with rare facility of hand and an admirable talent for portraiture, this pupil of Alessio Baldovinetti rapidly became the foremost painter of the realist school in Florence, and rose high in the favour of the Medici and other leading families. The Vespucci were among his earliest patrons, and it was about this time that on the walls of this same church of Ognissanti, he painted the recently discovered fresco of the *Madonna della Misericordia*, with the chief representatives of this illustrious family kneeling at the Virgin's feet. So that Sandro may well have been stirred, as Vasari tells us, "to put forth all his power," and prove his superiority to his able and industrious but decidedly prosaic rival. The style and temperament of the two masters was curiously unlike, and the contrast between them is nowhere more striking than in the two frescoes bearing the golden wasps of the Vespucci, which may still be seen side by side in Ognissanti.

Both Saints are represented sitting at their writing-desk, absorbed in profound meditation. But while Ghirlandajo is wholly intent on the external aspect of his theme and renders every detail of St. Jerome's cell—the candle and hour-glass, the inkstand and scissors, the Cardinal's hat and flask on the shelf behind him, even the variegated pattern of the table-cloth with Dutch-like accuracy, Botticelli, after his wont, takes us into the heart of his subject and lays bare the working of Augustine's mind. The mystic bent of his nature here comes to his help. He knows the power of the unseen and can realize with penetrating sympathy the zeal and devotion of the great Saint and scholar. We see Augustine sitting in his narrow cell with a pen and ink-pot in his hand, and a book open before him. His jewelled mitre stands on the table at his side, and several massive folios are set on the shelf behind. On the open pages of one of these we read the words:

Dove San Martino è disperato
E dov'è andato fuor della Porta al Prato.

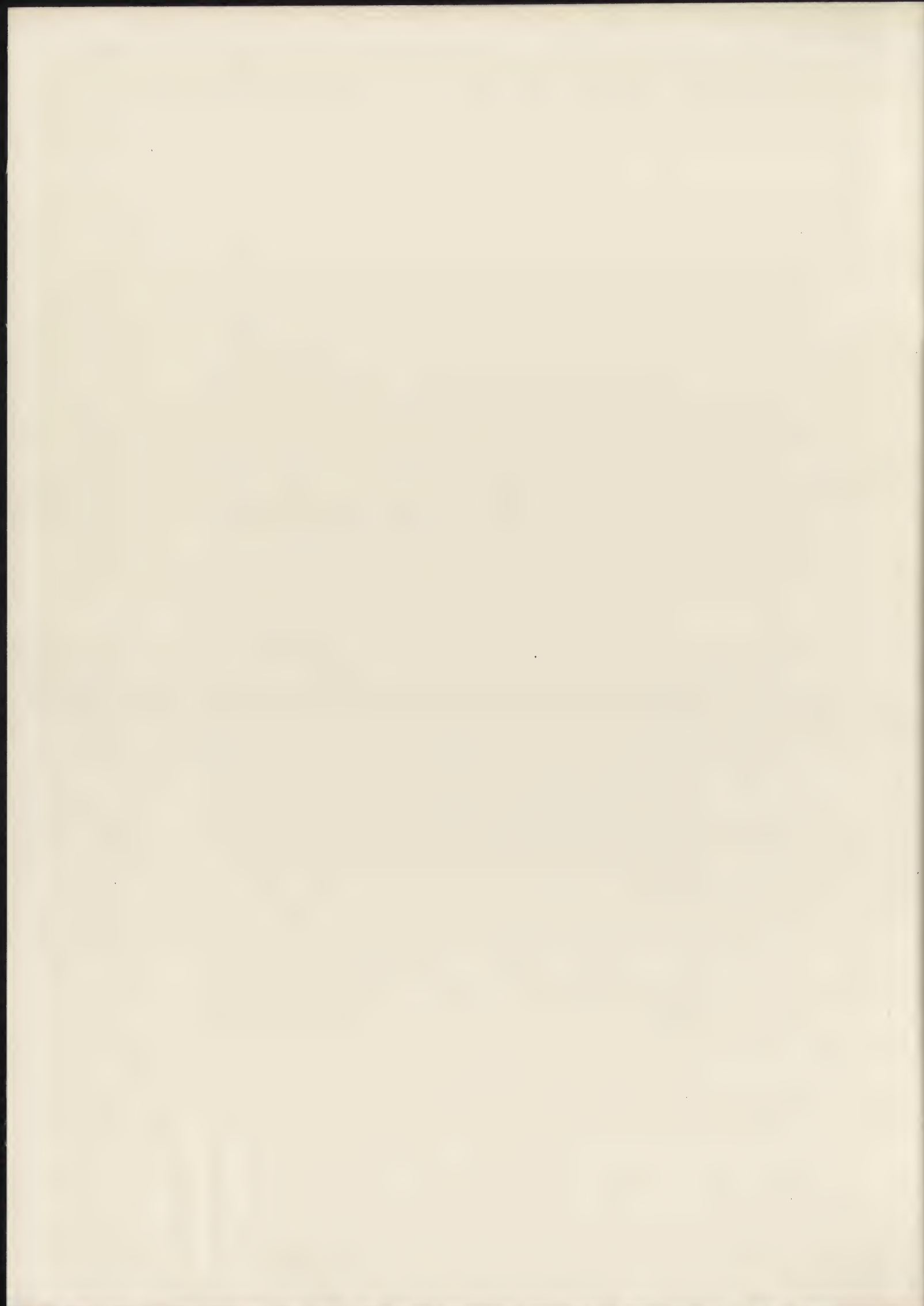
This inscription, as Herr Brockhaus has lately told us,¹ evidently refers to the Camaldoli hermit known as the Beato Martino, who lived in the Convent of San Salvatore near the Porta San Frediano. Close to this

¹ "Forschungen über Florentinischer Kunstwerke." H. Brockhaus.



Alinari.

SAINT AUGUSTINE
Ognissanti, Florence.



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gate was the village of Peretola, where the Vespucci had their country-house, and where, the German writer suggests, the good Canon may have been first inspired with the desire to enter holy orders. The same commentator suggests that, in the astrolabium or armillary sphere which stands on the desk before Augustine, we have a reference to the Canon's nephew, Amerigo Vespucci. It is worthy of note that an engraving of Amerigo examining the Southern Cross, by the aid of this astronomical instrument, figures on the title-page of Bandini's life of the famous Florentine traveller.

But all the interest of the picture is centred on the head of the Saint, with its fine, ascetic features and fiery expression. The worn face and deeply-marked furrows tell of studious nights and anxious days, of long struggles and passionate prayers, before the restless heart could find its true rest. Now as he ponders over the problems which perplex his soul, the Saint lays one hand earnestly on his breast, and his upturned eyes and parted lips seem to breathe a prayer to heaven for light. Once more we realize how thoroughly Botticelli has mastered the principles laid down by Alberti and learnt to express the thoughts and emotions of the soul by the action and movement of the body—"a thing indeed," writes our author, "requiring the greatest diligence, since the motions of the human mind are so infinitely varied." As Leonardo wrote: "A good painter has two chief objects to paint—man and the intention of his soul. The former is easy, the latter hard, for it must be expressed by attitudes and movements of the limbs; and it is only by a complete knowledge of gesture that it is possible to paint the different emotions of the soul."

In 1480, this year which was so full of great enterprises, a second income-tax return gives us a glimpse into Sandro's private life. The painter, we learn from this precious paper, was at that time still living in the house of his old father, in the Via Nuova. Mariano himself is described as being eighty-six years of age and too old to be able to work any longer—*non fa più nulla*.¹ But his large family of children and grandchildren are still for the most part living under the paternal roof, and in order to make room for these twenty souls, the old tanner rents another house at nine florins a year, standing next to his own. His

¹ "Gaye Carteggio," vol. i, p. 344, and E. Müntz, "Chronique des Arts," 1899, p. 312.

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wife is dead and the household is managed by her sister Monna Vangelista, a woman of seventy, who had married Mariano's brother Amedeo, and been left a widow some years before. The eldest son, Giovanni, surnamed Botticello, aged sixty, carries on business as a merchant of leather, and has a family of seven children, by his wife, Monna Nera, the daughter of Benincasa dei Chori. Of these the eldest, Benincasa, a youth of nineteen, is in Rome with the banker Salviati, a member of the same family as the luckless Archbishop of Pisa, who was hung for his share in the Pazzi Conspiracy, and whose effigy Sandro had recently painted on the Palazzo. This young man, however, his father is careful to add, earns but a small salary and costs his parents more money than he brings in. Amedeo, the next brother, aged eleven, is employed in a Florentine bank and has good prospects of advancement in time, but does not yet earn a single *maravedi*! Agnolletto, aged eight, and Jacopo, aged three, are still at school, and the three girls, Alessandra, Anna, and Smeralda, an infant in arms, have not yet been provided with dowries.

We now come to old Mariano's second son, Antonio, who is described as being fifty-one years of age, and who was formerly a goldsmith, but has apparently abandoned this trade and is now living at Bologna, where he sells books and makes about two florins a month, after paying his expenses. He has three children, a girl of nine, Elizabetta, and two boys, Mariano, aged seven, who grew up to be an artist and lived till 1527, and Bartolommeo, aged five. His wife, Bartolommea Spigolati, is seven months with child.

The third brother, Simone, is about forty-one years of age, and is still living at Naples, whither, it will be remembered, he had gone with the Rucellai as a boy, but without occupation. Finally, there is Mariano's younger son, the painter Sandro, "who works in the house when he chooses." His age is given as thirty-three, which does not agree with the statement that he was thirteen in the *catasto* of 1457, and since the former record is probably correct, we may conclude that in 1480, Sandro had entered his thirty-sixth year.

In spite of the usual attempt to plead poverty in the presence of the tax-gatherer, it is plain that the family were in comfortable circumstances. Mariano had inherited property from his brother Jacopo, also

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a tanner, who had lately died childless, and the lands which he owned at Peretola produced seventy-two bushels of wheat and thirteen measures of wine in the year. The old man also rented a farm at Careggi, for which he paid the yearly sum of thirty florins, in order that he might have a safe retreat "where he might seek shelter in time of plague." This last fact is worthy of notice. It is interesting to know that Botticelli's father had a country home at Careggi, close to Lorenzo's favourite villa on the Apennine slopes, in those days when the painter was constantly working for the Magnifico and his friends, and enjoyed the society of the distinguished poets and humanists of the Medici circle.

But the success of his recent works and the high esteem in which he was held by the Maecenas of the age, had spread Botticelli's fame beyond the walls of Florence, and early in the following year he received an important commission from a new and unexpected quarter. He was invited to Rome by Pope Sixtus IV, in order that he might superintend the decoration of the newly-erected chapel in the Vatican palace.

During many years this ambitious pontiff had been the bitterest enemy of Lorenzo dei Medici. His nephew, Girolamo Riario, had been the prime mover in the plot which cost Giuliano his life, and it was no secret that the Pazzi conspiracy had been hatched in the Vatican. When the Florentines in their just indignation hanged the Archbishop of Pisa and threw the young Cardinal, Raffaele Riario, into prison, the Pope retaliated by excommunicating Lorenzo and laying the city under an interdict. So bitter was the hatred which the Holy Father was known to entertain for Lorenzo that when, after the Magnifico's return from Naples, he was invited to go to Rome and treat with the Pope in person, Duke Ercole of Ferrara warned him solemnly not to run into the lion's mouth. But once the King of Naples had made peace with Florence, Sixtus IV was compelled to come to terms with his old enemy, and agreed to receive the envoys who were sent by Lorenzo in December, 1480, to make their submission and receive the papal absolution. One of the first conditions upon which the Pope insisted, however, was the removal of the effigies of the Pazzi conspirators from the façade of the Palazzo Pubblico. Now, by a singular fate, the very artist who had painted these effigies was invited to decorate the papal

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chapel in the Vatican. The names of Botticelli and his comrades were probably suggested to the Pope by his nephew, Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, afterwards the great pontiff, Julius II, who visited Florence on his way to France in June, 1480, and was magnificently entertained by Lorenzo on this occasion. His Holiness may also have heard of these masters from Giovanni Tornabuoni and Guido Antonio Vespucci, who were sent to Rome as the ambassadors of the Republic at the close of 1480, and were among Botticelli and Ghirlandajo's most influential patrons. Vasari, indeed, ascribes the Pope's invitation to the renown which Botticelli had acquired by his altar-piece in Santa Maria Novella. "So great," he writes, "was the fame which this *Adoration* brought him both in Florence and beyond the walls of the city, that Pope Sixtus having built a chapel in his palace in Rome and wishing it to be decorated with frescoes, appointed him to be overseer of the work."

But an earlier writer, the Anonimo Gaddiano, speaks of another *Adoration of the Magi* which Sandro painted, during his visit to Rome, and which he adds, "was held to be the finest of all his works." This, we have little doubt, was the beautiful version of the subject which is now in the Gallery of the Hermitage at St. Petersburg. Both in richness and harmony of colouring, as well as in beauty of composition, this little picture is a gem of the purest water. In some points the grouping resembles the Uffizi *Adoration*, in others it differs considerably from the earlier work. The same symmetrical arrangement is observed, but fewer figures are introduced in the foreground—and the Virgin and Child are brought more on a level with the kneeling Magi instead of being raised far above them. Sandro's composition, in fact, here bears more resemblance to the unfinished *Adoration* which Leonardo executed that year for the monks of San Donato in Florence. But in the details of the picture, the classical pillars which support the pent-house roof and the round arches of the ruined aqueduct, as well as in the prancing steeds on the right, which recall the famous horses of the Great Twin Brethren on Monte Cavallo, we see clear tokens of Sandro's presence in the Eternal City. Another remarkable feature of this *Adoration* is the beauty and variety of the landscape, with its wooded slopes and distant sea, which is seen through the pillars of the ruined temple, and extends far and wide on either side of the picture. There are none of the violent attitudes



From carbon-print by Messrs. Braun, Cöln and Co., Bonn.

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.
St. Petersburg.



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and exaggerated gestures which mar the beauty of the painter's later works, but the Three Kings and their attendants kneel in deep devotion before the manger-throne, and every figure is instinct with life and passion. In the fine young oak-trees growing on the right of the temple, we recognize the familiar device of Sixtus IV's family, which Raphael was one day to introduce in the frescoes on the ceiling of the Camera della Segnatura. This leads us to suppose that Sandro's picture may have been painted for Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, whose love of art was already well known, and it may have been this *Adoration* which first attracted the Pope's notice and led him to make choice of Sandro to superintend the decoration of his own chapel. But this is only conjecture. All we know for certain is, that on the 27th of October, 1481, a contract was drawn up between the Florentine architect Giovannino dei Dolci, who was at that time superintendent of the works of the Vatican Palace, and who is here dignified with the title of Pontifical Commissioner, and four painters whose names are given in the following order: Cosimo di Lorenzo di Filippo Rosselli, Alessandro Mariano and Domenico di Tommaso di Corrado (Ghirlandajo) of Florence, and Pietro Cristoforo of Città della Pieve, in the diocese of Perugia. By the terms of this document, these four masters "now residing in Rome," pledge themselves to paint ten frescoes of stories from the Old and New Testament, in the new Cappella Grande of the Apostolic Palace, "with the utmost diligence and faithfulness, to the best of their powers, and that of their assistants, according as the work has been already begun." The paintings are to be completed by the fifteenth day of the following month of March, 1482, and the price of each fresco is to be regulated by the valuation already made, and the payments already received, by the said painters for the works that have been already completed in the said chapel. And in case the said painters should not comply with the conditions here laid down, they will be subject to the heavy penalty of fifty gold ducats, which penalty they have voluntarily imposed upon themselves. It is clear from this document, which was discovered by Signor Domenico Gnoli in the Secret Archives of the Vatican, and first published by him in 1893,¹ that in October, 1481, Botticelli and his companions, Cosimo Rosselli,

¹ "Archivio dell' Arte," 1893.

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Ghirlandajo, and the Umbrian master Perugino, had already executed some portion of the frescoes in the papal chapel, and had received payments for their work. This is confirmed by more than one contemporary writer. The papal Secretary, Jacopo da Volterra, a careful and trustworthy annalist, has the following entry in his diary of 1481.

"On the first Sunday in Lent, being the eleventh day of March, divine service was held in the Pope's own hall, as the Capella Grande is being adorned with excellent and splendid paintings."

On Christmas Eve, 1481, he records that "vespers and mass were again celebrated in the pontifical hall, because the Capella Grande is not yet available for use, since, as I have often said before, it is being decorated with sacred emblems and paintings."¹ And Raffaele Maffei writes under the same date: "The Great Chapel is not yet finished, they are still painting it with emblems and other ornaments."

A second document, bearing the date of January 17th, 1482, which has been lately discovered by Dr. Heinrich Pogatscher, in the Vatican library, states that four of the frescoes executed by the four painters named in the former contract, were valued by Giovannino dei Dolci and the Mantuan artist Giovanni Luigi, at the price of 250 ducats each, and that the said masters received this sum from the Pope.² With regard to the assistants who are mentioned in the contract, we know that Cosimo Rosselli brought Piero di Cosimo with him, and that this artist had a considerable share in the landscapes of his master's frescoes, and in the opinion of some critics, executed the whole of the *Passage of the Red Sea*, commonly ascribed to Rosselli. In the same way Pintoricchio probably accompanied Perugino as his assistant to the Eternal City, and eventually painted both the frescoes of the *Journey of Moses* and the *Baptism of Christ*. We do not learn the names of the assistants whom Sandro brought with him to help in the great work, but from another document, published by Dr. Steinmann,³ we find that Fra Diamante, Filippo Lippi's old scholar, received 100 florins from the Pope for work in the Vatican Chapel, and may therefore conclude that the Carmelite friar who had worked with him under Fra Filippo Lippi

¹ Muratori, "Rerum Scriptores Italicorum," vol. xxiii, pp. 123, 159.

² "Die Sixtinische Kapelle," Dr. E. Steinmann, vol. i, p. 633.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

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accompanied him to Rome. Some writers have supposed that Fra Filippo's son, Filippino Lippi, who certainly received his first training from Botticelli, may also have been employed as one of his assistants; but no trace of his work is to be seen, and a contemporary record, to which we shall have occasion to refer later, expressly states that the friar's son Filippino was not one of the painters who were employed in the Pope's Chapel.

CHAPTER X

1481—1482

The Sixtine Chapel.—Botticelli's share in its decoration.—Portraits of the Popes.—Subjects of the historical frescoes.—Their theological and political significance.—The *Temptation* and *Leper's Purification*.—The *Story of Moses*.—The *Punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram*.—Merits and Defects of Botticelli's frescoes.—Superiority of his work over that of his rivals.

THE new Papal Chapel in the Vatican, which Botticelli and his comrades were employed to decorate, formed part of a block of buildings which were erected by Pope Sixtus IV soon after his accession. It was above the library on the ground floor which Melozzo da Forlì had lately adorned with his frescoes, one of which is still preserved in the Vatican, the striking group of the Pope appointing the humanist Platina to be his librarian in the presence of the Cardinals and Girolamo Riario. The architect of these buildings was a Florentine master, Giovannino dei Dolci, or Johannes Petrus de Dulcibus, as he is styled in legal documents, who had been in Rome since the days of Nicholas V, and received a salary of eight florins a month, as superintendent of the works of the Apostolic Palace. The new buildings were begun in 1473, and the chapel is mentioned among the Pope's great and splendid works, in a curious manuscript poem of 1477, which is quoted by Dr. Pastor in his "History of the Popes," and is still preserved in the Court Library at Vienna. By the end of 1480 the builders had finished the fabric, and the painters were able to set to work early in the following spring. It is worthy of note, as a mark of the supremacy of Florentine art at this period, that both the architect of the Sixtine Chapel and the sculptor, Mino da Fiesole, who superintended the marble decorations of the interior, were citizens of Florence, and that three out of the four painters employed by the Pope were also of Florentine birth, while the fourth, Perugino, had received his artistic training in that city. The new chapel had been constructed with an

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especial view to ecclesiastical ceremonies, and was a plain, oblong building, 132 feet long and 45 feet wide, lighted by twelve round-headed windows in the upper part of the walls. A cornice with an iron balustrade ran round the foot of the windows, and from the first it was intended that both the ceiling and the unbroken surface of the lower portion of the walls, should be decorated with frescoes. The floor was adorned with a pavement of marble mosaics; a tribune for singers was erected at one end, and a richly-carved white marble balustrade enclosed the space reserved for the Pope and the members of the Sacred College.

Vasari tells us that the direction of the whole work was intrusted to Botticelli by Pope Sixtus, and adds that this master also painted the twenty-four portraits of the martyr-Popes in the niches between the windows. The latter part of his statement is certainly true as regards some of the Popes, in which Sandro's hand may be clearly recognized in spite of their ruined condition. Dr. Steinmann, who has devoted especial attention to the frescoes of the Sixtine Chapel, ascribes no less than seven of these portraits to him, and considers that Fra Diamante and possibly Ghirlandajo were the authors of the remaining seventeen. The figure of Sixtus II, with his hand laid on his breast and his eyes raised to heaven, bears a marked resemblance to the *St. Augustine* which Sandro had lately painted in Ognissanti, and both the heads of the venerable Stephanus Romanus and of the young and ascetic-looking Cornelius would seem to be his work. This row of portraits was no doubt the first part of the work to be executed, and this was probably the portion for which the painters had already received payment, when the contract of October, 1481, was drawn up. Since, however, there are fifteen large historical frescoes on the walls underneath the windows, and the document only provides for the execution of ten, it is possible that some of the lower series were also painted by that time.

The subjects of these frescoes were no doubt chosen by Sixtus IV himself, who had acquired considerable reputation as a theologian before his elevation to the Papacy. His object was to set forth the whole scheme of the world's redemption, and to give an outline of the Jewish and Christian dispensation as related in the Old and New Testament. The history of the founders of the Old and New Covenant are brought before us in this sanctuary. Since the chapel was dedicated

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to Santa Maria dell' Assunta, the *Assumption of the Virgin* was to occupy a central place over the altar, between the *Birth of Christ* and the *Finding of Moses*. These three frescoes were executed by Perugino, but were afterwards effaced under the pontificate of Paul III to make room for Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*. On the left wall of the Chapel, we have six scenes from the life of Moses, the lawgiver and leader of the chosen people and the recognized type of Christ. On the right wall, six subjects from the life of Christ, the founder of the Holy Church and Saviour of the world, are seen. But this was not to be the sole object of the paintings in the Sixtine Chapel. The glorification of the house of Rovere and of the great deeds of Pope Sixtus IV himself, as Dr. Steinmann has clearly shown, are kept in view throughout the series in order to gratify the personal vanity of the ambitious pontiff, and his resolute efforts to advance the honour and fortunes of his own family.

The first fresco on which Botticelli was employed occupies the space immediately opposite the Papal throne on the right wall. The subject which the painter was desired to illustrate, in conformity with the general scheme of decoration, was the *Temptation of Christ* as told in the Gospels. But the scenes relating to this event occupy so subordinate a part in the fresco, that the subject is almost lost sight of, and the meaning of Sandro's painting was never understood until a few years ago Dr. Steinmann unravelled the mystery and explained the true significance of the picture.¹ The *Purification of a Leper*, according to the law of Moses, is the subject here represented. The noble Renaissance temple which occupies the centre of Botticelli's fresco is an exact reproduction of the hospital of San Spirito, as seen in an old print of the façade of this building, which was afterwards destroyed when the hospital was enlarged. The building of this ancient foundation on a splendid scale, and the institution of a confraternity for its support, had been one of Sixtus IV's most important works, and had been only lately completed when the painters set to work on the decoration of the Sixtine Chapel. Since the Pope himself belonged to the Franciscan Order and the care of lepers had been one of the first duties enjoined on his followers by the Saint of Assisi, the choice of

¹ "Sandro Botticelli," Dr. E. Steinmann (translated by C. Dodgson), pp. 44-52.

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this subject was especially appropriate. The mystical meaning attached to leprosy throughout the Old Testament as a type of sin, and the power of the Church to absolve the sinner from his guilt, just as the High Priest of the old Jewish law could declare the purified leper free from spot, gave additional significance to the theme which Sandro here illustrates.

The difficulty of combining all of these different motives in a single fresco has been, on the whole, successfully overcome by the painter. In front of the Renaissance façade, the different ceremonies for the purification of a leper, as prescribed by the law of Moses in the fourteenth chapter of the book of Leviticus, are successfully illustrated. Immediately before the temple stands the altar of sacrifice with the burning cedar wood, surrounded by a crowd of figures. The leper himself, still feeble and suffering from the results of his illness, is led up the steps of



Photograph—Anderson.]

PURIFICATION OF A LEPER
(CAPPELLA SISTINA, ROME)

the altar, supported by two friends. His wife advances quickly from the opposite side, carrying the appointed offering of two doves in a basket on her head, half covered with a linen cloth, and hastens towards the fountain of running water where one of the birds is to be killed.

Lev. xiv, v. 5. "*And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water:*

6. "*As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood*

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and the scarlet and the hyssop, and shall dip them in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water:

7. "*And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field.*"

This part of the ceremony takes place immediately in front of the altar, where the high priest receives the blood of the dove in a golden bowl from the hands of a young Levite, and dips a brush of green myrtle—a plant endowed by the Mediaeval Church with the same healing properties as the hyssop of the Old Testament—together with the scarlet wood, into the blood of the victim, with which the leper is to be sprinkled seven times before he can be pronounced cleansed from his leprosy.

The high priest, who occupies so prominent a position in the picture, is represented clad in his pontifical robes, with the fringe of golden bells and pomegranates, the jewelled breast-plate bearing the motto "Holiness to the Lord," as described in the book of Leviticus. The high tiara on his head is crowned with a gold acorn, the badge of the Rovere, and his features are those of the Pope himself.

In the group of spectators standing on the right of the altar, several prominent personages of the Papal Court are introduced, who were probably members of the Confraternity of Santo Spirito, to which the Pope and most of the Cardinals belonged. We recognize the features of the Pope's nephew, the proud and hated Girolamo Riario, the husband of Caterina Sforza, who is seen standing in the right-hand corner of the fresco, wrapt in a dark red mantle, and bearing his bâton as Gonfaloniere of the Church, an office to which the Pope had appointed him a few months before. Dr. Steinmann, who has succeeded in identifying several of these figures,¹ recognizes another kinsman of the Pope, the Commendatore di Santo Spirito and General of the Confraternity, Innocente della Rovere, in the stately personage standing behind the high priest, wearing his cross and golden chain of office; and suggests that the fair-haired woman with the long throat who appears with her maid in the Pope's train may be Caterina Sforza herself. On the opposite side, a few steps in advance of Girolamo Riario,

¹ *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 466-470.

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is a striking group of three dignified personages, who were probably all members of the Sacred College. In the last of the three we recognize the dark eyes and thoughtful face of the young Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, who stands here with a white napkin in his hands, and twenty years later was to ascend the papal throne as Julius II, and to employ Michelangelo to paint the roof of this same chapel with his immortal frescoes.

In the beautiful young woman with her fluttering draperies who moves swiftly forward, carrying the bundle of cedar wood on her head, we recognize one of those types which, first introduced by Fra Filippo Lippi, in the background of his *Pitti tondo*, recur frequently in Sandro's Florentine pictures, and was to appear again in the fresco of the *Incendio del Borgo*, designed by Raphael and his pupils in the Vatican Stanze. The curly-headed little boy at her side, carrying a fine bunch of purple grapes in his arms and looking down in alarm at the snake which is coiled round his bare leg,

is an evident reminiscence of the antique marble statue of a *Girl with a Dove looking back at the Serpent*, now in the Capitol Museum. Other classical motives occur in the buildings of the background, while in the tall and stately oak-trees planted on either side of the temple and growing along the seashore, we see once more the device of the Della Rovere family. But the most interesting objects in the landscape are the church and convent of S. Francesco at Assisi, which rise on the



Cardinal Giuliano d. Rovere

[Photograph—Anderson]

GROUP FROM THE PURIFICATION OF A
LEPER
(CAPPELLA SISTINA, ROME)

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right of the hospital, immediately under the heights of Monte Subasio. This sacred spot, the home and burial-place of the great founder, was no doubt introduced, as Dr. Steinmann has pointed out, in honour of the order to which the Pope belonged.

The different episodes of the *Temptation of Christ* appear in the background, in conformity with the general scheme of decoration. On the rocky heights, under an olive grove in the left-hand corner, Satan, clad in the habit of a Franciscan friar, with staff and rosary in his hand, and the cloven hoof and bat's wings peeping out from under his monastic garb, points to the stones at the feet of the Son of God, and asks Him to command that they should be made bread. In the centre of the picture the devil appears again, standing on the topmost pinnacle of the Renaissance temple, and with outstretched hand calls upon the Christ to cast himself down. The look which he receives in return, conveys the rebuke implied in the words: "It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Finally, in the right-hand corner of the fresco, Christ and the Tempter are seen on the top of the high mountain, whence all the glory of the kingdoms of the world are displayed before the eyes of the Son of God, who, lifting his hand with a commanding gesture, utters the words: "Get thee behind me, Satan!" At that word we see the Prince of Darkness, casting aside his friar's habit, staff and rosary, plunge headlong into the abyss, while three winged angels place bread and wine on a table decked with a fair white linen cloth, and minister unto their Lord in the wilderness.

Botticelli's second fresco was an illustration of the early life of Moses, and occupied the space on the left wall opposite the *Temptation*, to which it corresponds. Here no less than seven different episodes from the history of the Law-giver and the people of Israel had to be combined in a single fresco. Out of this unpromising material the painter has contrived to make a singularly beautiful and poetic composition. With true artistic feeling he seizes on the most picturesque incident in the story—the meeting of Moses with the daughters of Jethro at the well—and groups the other scenes round this central subject. We see Moses, the dark-haired stranger, drawing water in his bucket from the well for the thirsty sheep who wait by the stone troughs under the shady oak trees, and the Midianite shepherds

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retreating hastily, while the fair shepherdesses look with shy gratitude in their eyes at the chivalrous Hebrew who has come to their help. Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, with her tall, graceful form, gentle face and fair hair wreathed with myrtle, bearing the distaff and apple branch—a symbol of labour and its reward—in her hands, is one of Sandro's most attractive creations, and the whole scene is a simple and charming idyll of pastoral life.

The other episodes are skilfully distributed so as not to interfere



Photograph—Anderson.]

MOSES AND ZIPPORAH AT THE WELL
(CAPPELLA SISTINA, ROME)

with this central motive. On the right we see Moses in the act of slaying the Egyptian in his indignation at the ill-treatment of one of his brethren, while the wounded Israelite falls back in the arms of his wife. Next the avenger appears flying into the wilderness to escape from the wrath of Pharaoh, leaving the pillared temples of Egypt behind him. Then again he appears driving away the Midianite shepherds—the wild Bedouins of the desert—who troubled the peace of Jethro's daughters. Immediately above the group under the oak trees by the well, we see him in the solitude of the desert, putting the shoes from off his feet and kneeling before the burning bush to hear the word

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of the Lord. Finally, in the foreground to the left of the picture, the great deliverer is seen leading the chosen people out of Egypt, followed by his wife and family bearing their household goods. Among these, Aaron is a conspicuous figure, with his Oriental turban and black beard; one little child looks up at his mother with the appealing gaze that Sandro has often repeated in his pictures of Madonnas with the



Photograph—Anderson.]

GROUP FROM THE LIFE OF MOSES
(CAPPELLA SISTINA, ROME)

Infant Christ. Another fair-haired boy carries a white dog—his chief treasure, as Mr. Ruskin remarks in his quaint way: "It is a little, sharp-nosed, white fox-terrier, full of fire and life, but not strong enough for a long walk. So little Gershom, whose name was the Stranger, because his father had been a stranger in a strange land—little Gershom carries his white terrier under his arm, lying on the top of a large bundle to make it comfortable. The doggie puts its sharp nose and bright eyes out, above his hand, with a little roguish gleam sideways in them, which means—if I can read rightly a dog's expression—that he has been barking at Moses all the morning and has nearly put him out of temper; and without any doubt I can assert to you that there is not any other such piece of animal painting in the world—so brief, intense, vivid, and absolutely balanced in truth; as tenderly drawn as if it had been a Saint, and yet as humorously as Landseer's *Lord Chancellor Poodle*."¹

In point of simple charm and animation, this fresco of *Moses at the*

¹ "Ariadne Florentina," p. 262.

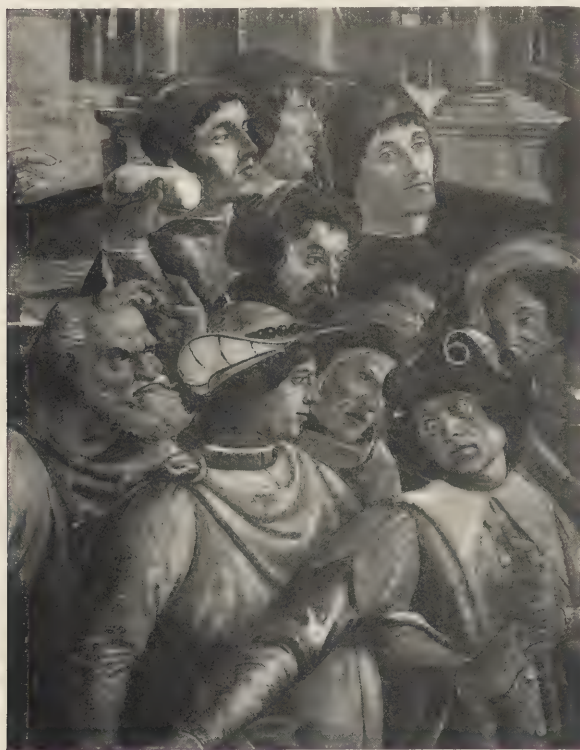
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Well is unique among Sandro's compositions and surpasses all the other subjects painted on the walls of the Sixtine Chapel. Unfortunately it has been sadly injured by the erection of a baldacchino over the Papal throne, and the figures in the right-hand portion have been repainted.

The Punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram is the subject of Botticelli's third and last fresco. "Let no man take office upon himself, unless he be called of God, as Aaron was." These words of the Latin text are inscribed on the arch of Constantine, which stands in the centre of the picture, and strike the keynote of the composition. This subject, according to Dr. Steinmann, was suggested by the revolt of the Archbishop of Krain, a Hungarian prelate who had dared to summon a General Council at Bâle in March, 1482, in open defiance of the Papal authority, and had openly denounced Pope Sixtus IV as a "child of the devil." A retribution as swift and sudden as the judgement of Korah soon overtook him and his friends. The rebellious archbishop was arrested before many months were over, and committed suicide in his prison at Basle. As Sandro had already glorified the Pope's munificence and splendour, as a friend of the sick and builder of hospitals, in his first fresco; and as he had recorded the deliverance of Rome from the invading army of the Duke of Calabria in the *Triumph of Moses over the Egyptians*, so now he was called upon to commemorate this fresh proof of the divine authority which was committed to the successors of the Prince of the Apostles, when he painted the new fresco on the wall opposite Perugino's *Delivery of the Keys to St. Peter*. The grand and imposing figure of Moses, who, robed in a rich, dark green mantle bordered with gold, stands before the altar set in front of the arch of Constantine, and, lifting his avenging rod, calls down fire from heaven on the rebels, lends the composition a certain unity which is lacking in Sandro's other frescoes. The destruction of the guilty conspirators who have dared to assume the priestly office in plain disregard of the law of Moses, is rendered with dramatic vigour. One man is struck down in the act of approaching the altar of sacrifice, another falls back with a cry of terror before the uplifted rod of Moses, and a third lies prostrate on the ground, while Aaron, a majestic figure in his priestly robes and triple tiara, is seen standing behind the altar, calmly swinging his censer. His son Eleazar, seizing one of the censers from the altar, scatters the

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sacrilegious fire with a gesture of swift and fiery zeal, and on the right, one of the blasphemers is dragged away to be stoned by a crowd of indignant Israelites. On the left, Moses appears again, standing with his uplifted arm above the open abyss where Dathan and Abiram are being swallowed up, while Eldad and Medad, robed in white, hover in the air above and prophesy in the name of the Lord.



Photograph—Anderson.]

GROUP OF THE BLASPHEMER FROM THE
PUNISHMENT OF KORAH
(CAPPELLA SISTINA)

This tresco is remarkable for the richness of the colouring and costumes, the beauty of the landscape setting with its wooded hills gently sloping to the sea, and the noble porticoes and colonnades, which are introduced in the background. Many heads of striking individuality meet us in the throng of spectators, assembled on the right of the picture as well as in the opposite corner. Several of these are evidently portraits. The blasphemer whom we see in the right hand dragged away to die wearing a rich fur collar and red mantle over his priestly robe, is the revolted Archbishop Andreas of Krain,

and in the striking head of the youth, with the long nose and curly hair, standing by his tutor's side in the opposite corner, at the feet of the white-robed elders, we may recognize Alessandro Farnese, who was afterwards raised to the dignities of both Cardinal and Pope, and was to become known to history as Paul III.¹ Yet one more figure, the second in the group on the right, is supposed by Dr. Steinmann to

¹ "Die Sixtinische Kapelle," Dr. E. Steinmann, vol. i, p. 511.

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be the painter's own portrait. The deep-set eyes and finely-cut features have the same keen, eager expression as in the portrait of the Uffizi *Adoration*, and Sandro's black cape and dark vest are conspicuous by their simplicity, among the scarlet robes and splendid apparel of the Cardinals and dignitaries who are present.

These three frescoes, which Botticelli painted on the walls of the Sixtine Chapel during the years 1481 and 1482, are among his most remarkable achievements. They reveal at once the profound influence



Photograph—Anderson.]

Sandro Botticelli

MOSES FROM THE PUNISHMENT OF KORAH
(CAPELLA SISTINA, ROME)

which the classical monuments of ancient Rome had produced upon his art, and his increased mastery in the rendering of form and movement, and the expression of human emotion. They remain the most varied and dramatic of all his works, and reveal more of his power as a creative and original genius, than any other of his compositions. And they show his supremacy among contemporary artists, whether his rivals were of Florentine or Umbrian race. It is true that the works which Sandro painted in the Pope's chapel fall short in some respects of those that were executed by his fellow-artists. They lack the calm

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repose and aerial space of Perugino's compositions, and the symmetrical arrangement and unity which lend a certain air of grandeur to Ghirlandajo's more prosaic creations. But in wealth and variety of imaginative conception, in beauty of type and picturesque detail, in vigorous action and subtlety of expression, in depth and intensity of emotion, Sandro's frescoes far excel the works executed by his companions in the Chapel of Pope Sixtus.

CHAPTER XI

1482

Botticelli returns to Florence.—His habits and character.—Love of his pupils.—Filippino Lippi's frescoes in the Carmine.—Portrait of Sandro introduced.—Anecdotes of the painter related by Vasari and the Anonimo Gaddiano.

WE learn from the chronicler of the Papal court, Jacopo da Volterra, that the decoration of the Sixtine Chapel was completed by the month of August, 1483. On the 10th of July, being the Vigil of the Feast of St. Lawrence, the Pope, whose impatience could no longer be restrained, paid an unexpected visit to the chapel to see how the work was progressing, and found the frescoes almost finished. A month later, on the Feast of the Assumption, the Chapel was solemnly opened by his Holiness. Crowds of visitors were admitted to see the sanctuary which had been adorned by the foremost of living masters.¹ Sandro Botticelli's share in the work was probably completed some months, although it is doubtful if he can have returned to Florence before the end of 1482.

The arrest and death of the revolted Archbishop of Krain, which, as Dr. Steinmann has shown, was the incident illustrated in Sandro's fresco of the *Punishment of Korah*, did not take place until December, 1482; and it is, therefore, hardly possible that this part of the painter's work in the Papal Chapel was finished much before Christmas.

According to Vasari, Pope Sixtus, no mean authority in artistic matters, was highly satisfied with Botticelli's frescoes, and gave the painter "a considerable sum of money, recognizing that he had surpassed all his peers and acquired greater fame and reputation than any of the competitors. But unfortunately," the biographer continues, "Sandro, with his usual recklessness, squandered all the money that he had earned in Rome, and having finished that part of the work

¹ "Muratori," R. I. S., vol. xxiii, p. 185.

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which was assigned to him, and seen it uncovered, he returned suddenly to Florence." That Botticelli was a dreamy and unpractical person, setting little store on money and careless of personal advantage or honour, we can well believe. But Vasari's account of his idle and extravagant habits is probably as much exaggerated as his repeated assertions that the painter abandoned his work, and consequently fell into dire poverty in later years.

The historian, however, does full justice to Sandro's genial temper and to the great affection which he cherished not only for his own pupils, but for all those who loved and studied art. "He loved beyond measure those whom he knew to be diligent students of art." As a natural result, the great master was popular with all the young painters in Florence. Even scholars in the rival workshop, Bartolommeo di Giovanni and the young Michelangelo Buonarroti, both of whom received their first training from Ghirlandajo, were on friendly terms with Botticelli, and the former worked for many years as his assistant. The most distinguished of all his pupils, Filippino, showed his affection for his master by introducing a portrait of Sandro into his first important work, the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel of the Carmine. The task of finishing this series of paintings, which had been interrupted by the early death of Masaccio in 1428, was assigned to Sandro's promising scholar by the Carmelite friars, who were anxious to complete the decoration of their convent church and had not forgotten that Filippino's father had once been a brother of their Order. The young painter may have received this commission while Botticelli and Ghirlandajo were still absent, and probably executed the second fresco, which represents the *Crucifixion of St. Peter*, soon after his master's return from Rome. Many of the leading personages of the Medici circle, who were closely associated with Sandro, figure in these works of Filippino. Among the portraits introduced in Masaccio's unfinished painting of the *Raising of the King's Son*, Vasari mentions Luigi Pulci, the poet of the *Morgante Maggiore* and of Lorenzo's "Giostra," whose great epic had only recently appeared in print for the first time; Piero Guicciardini, the kinsman of the historian, who left his books so reluctantly to joust with the gay Giuliano; and Tommaso Soderini, the first cousin of the Magnifico, and one of Sandro's most intimate friends. The painter Antonio

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Pollaiuolo, a tall man with a high cap and long nose, appears in the next fresco of the *Trial of St. Peter and St. Paul*, standing close by the throne of the Emperor Nero, while Botticelli stands in front of the archway, which connects this subject with that of the *Crucifixion of St. Peter*, watching the scene of martyrdom. He wears a long red mantle, green leggings, and has a gray cap on his head; while in the profile of his face we recognize the same strongly-marked features, deep-set eyes, and long locks, as, standing a little apart from the crowd, he fixes his gaze intently on the scene before him.

But this earnest, serious man, who pondered so deeply over the gravest themes, and whose fairest faces are clouded with the same shadow of majestic sadness, could be gay enough at times. Sandro, writes Vasari, was a very pleasant person—" *Fu Sandro persona molto piacevole*"—famous for the merry sayings and practical jokes in which he frequently indulged with his friends and pupils. The biographer proceeds to recount several of these for our benefit.

On one occasion, Biagio Tucci, an artist who worked with him for many years, and was associated with him in several important occasions, painted a replica of one of his master's most popular pictures—a *tondo* of the Madonna with eight life-sized angels, which, in Vasari's days, adorned the Church of San Francesco, outside the gates of San Miniato. Sandro succeeded in finding him a customer who promised to give six florins for the picture, and hastened to tell Biagio the good news. At the same time he advised his pupil to hang up the Madonna in a good light, and promised to bring the citizen, who had agreed to buy the picture, to see it the next morning. Biagio was overjoyed at his good fortune and readily followed his master's advice. But that evening, when Biagio had gone home, Sandro and another of his assistants, Jacopo by name, cut out eight scarlet paper caps, such as were worn by the chief magistrates, and with the help of a little white wax, fixed them on the heads of the eight angels who were grouped round the Madonna in Biagio's *tondo*. The painter returned the next morning and Sandro introduced the citizen who had promised to buy the picture, and who was in the secret. Great was Biagio's amazement when he saw that his Madonna, instead of being surrounded by angels, was sitting in the midst of the Signory of Florence. He began to make excuses

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and protest his ignorance of the alteration in his picture, but the merchant took no notice and began to praise the work. So Biagio remained silent and accompanied his customer to his house, where the artist received the six florins which had been agreed upon as the price of the picture. When Biagio returned to the *bottega*, he found that Sandro and Jacopo had removed the red paper caps in his absence, and that his angels were once more angels, and no longer hooded citizens. For a while the poor artist remained stupefied, unable to understand what could have happened. At length he turned to Sandro, saying: "*Maestro mio*, I know not if I am dreaming or where I am! when I was here before, these angels had red caps on their heads and now they have none—what can this mean?" "You are out of your mind, my poor Biagio," replied Sandro gravely. "This money has turned your head. If this were the case, do you suppose for a moment that this citizen would have bought your picture?" "That is true," replied Biagio; "he certainly did not say a word of this to me; but still it seems a very strange thing." In the end, all the other apprentices and assistants came round him, saying the same as Sandro, until Biagio began to think that he had been the victim of some delusion of his own brain.

Another time, a clothweaver came to live next door to Sandro, and put up eight looms in his house, which, when they were at work, not only deafened poor Sandro with the noise of the shuttles, but shook the whole house, which was none too solidly built, so that the painter could not do any work or even remain in the house. In vain he begged his neighbour to remedy his grievance, but the man replied that he could and would do as he chose in his own house. Upon this Sandro, filled with indignation, caused an enormous stone, "which would have been a waggon-load of itself," to be balanced on the wall of his own house, which was higher than that of his neighbour and not by any means firm. Every time the wall shook, this stone was in danger of falling, and of crushing not only the roofs and floors of the house, but the looms and the weavers who were at work, to the dismay of the troublesome neighbour. Terrified at this new peril, the man hastened to Sandro, but received the same reply which he himself had made before, namely, that in his own house he could and would do as he pleased. Since he was

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unable to obtain any other answer, he was obliged to come to reasonable terms, and from that time proved a good and peaceable neighbour.

"And it is also said," continues Vasari, "that on one occasion, Sandro, by way of a joke, went to the vicar of his parish and accused one of his friends of holding the heretical opinions of the Epicureans, and believing that the soul dies with the body. The injured citizen summoned his accuser to meet him before the ecclesiastical court, and when Sandro appeared, he exclaimed: 'It is true that I hold this opinion concerning this man's soul, who is a beast. And do you not also hold him to be a heretic, since without being learned, and hardly indeed knowing how to read, he has ventured to write a commentary on Dante and take the poet's name in vain?'" The anecdote is worthy of note as showing Botticelli's interest in theological questions and his well-known love of Dante, whose "*Divina Commedia*" he certainly illustrated, in a manner which proves that he had studied the text very closely, if he did not actually write a commentary on the great poem.

But the best of these stories of Sandro is told by the Anonimo Gaddiano. One day his intimate friend, Messer Tommaso Soderini, a favourite cousin and loyal follower of Lorenzo dei Medici was urging him to marry before it was too late. The painter steadily refused to be persuaded, and when Messer Tommaso still pressed the point he replied: "I will tell you what happened to me the other night. I dreamt that I was married, and the bare idea made me feel so miserable, that for fear I should fall asleep and dream the same dream over again, I got up and rushed about the streets of Florence all night, as if I were a madman!" "After that sally," adds the writer, "Messer Tommaso saw that this was not the kind of soil to plant a vineyard in."¹

Instances of Sandro's power of repartee and shrewd, if not always civil, answers, were evidently commonly repeated by his contemporaries. On one occasion, continues the Anonimo, he said to a certain person who had expressed a wish that he had a hundred tongues with which to defend his arguments, "You say that you want more tongues, as if you had not already more than you require! You had better wish for more brains, poor fool, as it is very clear that you were born with none!"

¹ C. de Fabriczy, "*Il Codice dell' Anonimo Gaddiano*," *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 1893.

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A dreamer and a mystic at heart, yet a gay and lively companion, the best of masters and truest of friends, with a kind heart and keen sense of humour, full of sympathy for promising scholars and of love for little children, taking delight in the society of his intimate friends, but loving his books still better, spending freely and giving largely, strong in his likes and dislikes, deeply religious but a stern foe to cant and hypocrisy, passionate in his enthusiasm for great leaders and lost causes—such was Sandro Botticelli, the favourite painter of Lorenzo dei Medici and the faithful follower of Savonarola.

CHAPTER XII

1483—1489

Botticelli works for the Signoria and Lorenzo dei Medici.—His frescoes at the Villa of Spedaletto.—A Milanese agent's report of Sandro and his contemporaries to Lodovico Sforza.—Frescoes of the Villa Lemmi.—Wedding of Lorenzo Tornabuoni and Giovanna degli Albizzi.—Boccaccio pictures in Casa Pucci.—Myths and historical subjects painted by Botticelli's assistants.

WHEN Botticelli returned from Rome he stood at the height of his renown. He was thirty-eight years of age, in the prime of manhood and the full maturity of his powers. His frescoes in the Papal Chapel had brought him new fame, and now Leonardo had left Florence to find a home at the Court of Milan, Sandro held the foremost place among artists, alike in the favour of Lorenzo dei Medici and in the estimation of his contemporaries. His old friends welcomed him warmly; new and honourable commissions flowed in on all sides. On the 5th of October, 1482, it may be while he was still at work in the Sistine Chapel, he engaged to execute an order from the Signoria to adorn a hall in the Palazzo Pubblico with frescoes. His two most distinguished fellow-workers in the Pope's Chapel, Ghirlandajo and Perugino, were associated with him in this new task, together with his own assistant, Biagio di Antonio Tucci, the poor artist who was the victim of his practical jokes, but to whom he showed so much real kindness. The decree of the Signoria is quoted by Gaye from the Archives,¹ but we never learn if the commission was executed, and only know that in 1487, Sandro painted a *tondo* for the Hall of Audience belonging to the Council of the Massari. Unfortunately this picture has perished, as well as the still more important works which Botticelli executed about the same time for his old patron, Lorenzo dei Medici.

During the next few years he was chiefly engaged in working for the Magnifico, who employed him and his pupil Filippino as well as

¹ Gaye, "Carteggio," vol. i, p. 573.

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his two old rivals, Ghirlandajo and Perugino, to paint another great series of frescoes in the Lo Spedaletto near Volterra. This country house, on the heights looking over the valley of Pontedera, had formerly belonged to the Frati Ospitalieri of Siena, an order of nursing brothers founded in the eleventh century, and still retained its original name of Lo Spedaletto. It was a favourite residence of Lorenzo, who found the pure mountain air beneficial to his health, and drank the waters of Bagno di Morba, a medicinal spring in the neighbourhood, by the advice of his physician. During the last years of his life, he spent some weeks at this villa every autumn, and often received distinguished visitors and emissaries from Rome and Milan. "I am here, according to my custom," he writes to the papal envoy, Jacopo Gherardi, in October, 1487, "for the care of my health," and in August, 1491, only a few months before his death, he had himself carried in a litter on a last visit to this favourite retreat.

The importance of the frescoes with which Botticelli and his companions decorated the halls of this old Medici villa in the pleasant hill country of Volterra is proved by a report that was sent about the year 1487 or 1488 to Lodovico Sforza, by one of his agents. This cultured prince, who frequently consulted il Magnifico in matters relating to art, and had already taken Leonardo into his service, now desired his envoy to send him the names of the best painters in Florence, who could be trusted to decorate the Castello of Milan. In reply, the Milanese agent sent his master the following list of the best artists who were then living in Florence, together with remarks on the different degrees of estimation in which they were respectively held. It is worthy of notice that Botticelli holds the foremost place in this record.

"*Sandro di Botticello*, a most excellent painter, both in panel and wall-painting. His figures have a manly air, and are admirable in conception and proportion. *Filippino di Frato Filippo*, an excellent scholar of the above-named master, and a son of the rarest master of our day. His heads have an air of greater sweetness, but in my opinion less art. *Il Perugino*, a rare master, who excels in wall-paintings, and whose figures have an air of most angelic sweetness. *Domenico de Grillandajo*, a great master in panel painting, and a still better one in wall-painting. His figures are good, and he is an active and diligent master, who pro-

LO SPEDALETTO

duces a great quantity of works. All of the said masters, excepting *Filippino*, have given proof of their excellence in the Chapel of Pope Sixtus, and all four have since that time worked in Lo Spedaletto of the Magnifico Lorenzo. It is doubtful which one of them deserves the palm."

This interesting letter, which was recently discovered in the Milanese archives by Professor Müller-Walde,¹ and was apparently written during Lorenzo's lifetime, is of especial interest as a record of contemporary opinion, and gives a remarkably fair and accurate judgment of the respective merits of these distinguished masters. The high esteem in which both Fra Filippo Lippi and his pupil, Botticelli, were held at the time is especially striking.

We learn from Vasari that, as might be expected, the subjects which Lorenzo chose for the decoration of the Great Hall in his villa, were classical myths. Ghirlandajo, he tells us, painted a fresco of the *Story of Vulcan* in Lo Spedaletto, "and represents many nude figures forging the thunderbolts of Jove with their mighty hammers." From this we may conclude that Lorenzo's own dramatic poem of "The Loves of Mars and Venus," in which Vulcan figures as one of the principal speakers, and a description of his forge is introduced, was among the subjects which Sandro and his comrades painted on the villa walls. Unfortunately these frescoes have long ago disappeared.

At his death in 1492, Lorenzo left the house and estate of Lo Spedaletto to his favourite daughter, Maddalena, the wife of Pope Innocent the Eighth's nephew, Francesco Cybò, of whom he speaks with so much affection in his letters, calling her "the apple of her mother's eye." From Maddalena's descendants it passed, a hundred years later, to the Corsini family, who are still the owners of the property. Cardinal Retz, who paid a visit to the Grand Duke, Ferdinand II, in 1654, mentions the villa of Lo Spedaletto in the following passage of his "Memoirs":

"Signor Annibale conducted me to a house called L'Hospitalità, near Volterra, which is built upon the field of battle where Catiline was killed. This house once belonged to the great Lorenzo dei Medici, and has passed by marriage to the house of Corsini. I stayed there nine

¹ "Jahrbuch der Königlichen Preussischen Kunst," 1897.

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days, during which time I was magnificently entertained by the Grand Duke's officers."¹

Giovanni Bottari, who held the post of Librarian to Cardinal Corsini in the next century, adds a note regarding the frescoes of Lo Spedaletto, to the edition of 1759, saying that these paintings were in a portico that was exposed to the damp air, and have accordingly suffered much. Early in the last century, between 1820 and 1830, the Sala Grande of the Villa was destroyed by fire, and a few traces of colour on the brick loggia in the courtyard are the only fragments now remaining of these once famous paintings. A better fate has attended two of the frescoes which Sandro painted at Chiasso Macerelli, near Careggi, to commemorate the wedding of the young Lorenzo Tornabuoni with the beautiful Giovanna degli Albizzi. The bridegroom was the son of the wealthy Giovanni Tornabuoni, the uncle of Lorenzo, and senior partner of the Medici bank, as well as its chief agent in Rome, and was himself a brilliant and cultivated youth, intimately connected with the leading humanists of the Medici circle, and to their premier scholar. From his boyhood Lorenzo Tornabuoni sat at the feet of Angelo Poliziano; and to him the teacher inscribed his poem of "Ambra," the third of the "Silvae," in a dedication, calling him the friend of the Muses, and extolling his wide learning and excellent knowledge of Greek and Latin. When this accomplished young man led home the lovely daughter of Maso degli Albizzi, whose charms were sung by all the poets of Florence, there was great rejoicing among the Medici and their friends. "These things," writes Bernardo Racellai, "are necessary in a wife: she must be of good birth, beautiful, and endowed with a good dowry." All three conditions were amply fulfilled in this case, and Giovanni Tornabuoni had every reason to commend his son's choice. The wedding was celebrated on the 25th of June, 1486, and the two illustrious families vied with each other in the splendour of the banquets, tournaments, and torchlight dances, at which the guests were entertained. The Spanish ambassador to the Pope was present at the ceremony, and the bride was escorted to the Duomo by a hundred maidens of the noblest families in Florence, and fifteen youths wearing the liveries and colours of the Albizzi.

¹ "Mémoires," vol. iv, p. 246.

VILLA LEMMI

While Ghirlandajo, the favourite painter of the rich and prosperous banker, was employed to decorate the chapel of the Villa Tornabuoni at Chiasso Macerelli with frescoes, the finer taste of Lorenzo led him to choose Botticelli to adorn the hall of this country-house with allegorical subjects, in honour of his marriage. In this rural retreat, among the olives and cypresses of the hillside on the banks of the Terzolle stream, looking across at the heights of Fiesole and the blue Apennines in the distance, Sandro painted his two beautiful frescoes on the *piano nobile*



Photograph—Anderson.]

LORENZO TORNABUONI WELCOMED BY THE LIBERAL
ARTS
(FRESCO, LOUVRE)

of the villa to which the young Tornabuoni brought home the fair Giovanna. His friend Poliziano, we may be sure, had a share in the composition of the two paintings which were to commemorate the learning of Lorenzo and the beauty of his bride, just as he was afterwards employed by Giovanni Tornabuoni to write the Latin inscription on Ghirlandajo's frescoes in the family chapel of Santa Maria Novella.

In one painting, the bridegroom, a noble and refined youth, wearing a violet robe and a red cap on his long fair locks, is introduced into the presence of the Seven Liberal Arts, whose help and favour he seeks.

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But instead of representing the different members of the Trivium and Quadrivium, in separate subjects, each with her special attribute, as Giotto, the painter of the Spanish Chapel had done before, Botticelli with consummate skill combines them all in a single group, and gives us a beautiful picture. Seven bright-haired maidens, sitting in the shade of a laurel grove, receive the youthful stranger, who comes to seek their favour, with gracious smiles and courteous greeting. Each bears her own symbol. On the one side we see Arithmetic with a table of figures in her hand; Grammar bearing a scorpion and a switch; and Rhetoric with a scroll unfolded on her knees. On the other side we have Geometry, with a square resting upon her shoulder; next to her, Astronomy, holding a globe, and Music with a small organ and tambourine in her hands. Dialectic, the youngest of the group, leading Lorenzo by the hand, presents him to Philosophy, the Queen of all the Sciences, who, throned above the rest, and wearing a white robe and veil adorned with golden tongues of flame, bids the friend of the Muses welcome in her sister's name. This fresco has been sadly damaged, the pillars of the Temple of Science, in the background, are almost entirely effaced, and nothing, excepting his curly head, is now left of the little Love who once bore the shield with the Tornabuoni arms, at the feet of Lorenzo.

In the companion subject, we see the Graces, three lovely maidens with slender forms and wistful faces, hastening joyously to meet Lorenzo's fair and virtuous bride, on the threshold of her future home. Clad in delicately tinted robes of mauve and green and yellow, with golden hair floating on their shoulders and hands outstretched in eager welcome, these gentle damsels bring their gifts of Chastity, Beauty, and Love, under the symbol of opening flowers, to lay before Giovanna, who, standing under a portico, receives their offerings in a white handkerchief. The lovely features and auburn locks of the Florentine beauty have been reproduced by more than one contemporary artist. Niccolò Fiorentino, the favourite medallist of the Medici, has represented her, with the Three Graces, and the words, "Castitas, Pulchritudo, Amor" on the reverse of the medal. Ghirlandajo has painted her twice over; once in M. Rudolf Kann's superb portrait, with her finely-cut features in profile, and a string of red coral beads hanging on

VILLA LEMMI

the wall behind, and again in his fresco of the *Visitation* in the choir of Santa Maria Novella, clad in a rich costume, with pearls twisted among the coils of her elaborate head-dress. Sandro, on the contrary, has represented her in the simple red robe that she wore at home, with a transparent veil on her rippling hair, and the same string of pearls round her throat, that she wears in Niccolò's medal and Ghirlandajo's portrait. But the simplicity of her attire and the severe lines of the flowing robe seem to heighten the grace of Giovanna's bearing, and the sweet seriousness of her expression lends Sandro's portrait a charm which is



Photograph—Anderson.]

GIOVANNA TORNABUONI AND THE THREE GRACES
(LOUVRE)

lacking in these other representations. Unfortunately this fresco is even more badly damaged than the companion subject; the colour has peeled off in places, and the background has almost disappeared. Only a stem or two of the trees of the garden, and a fountain of antique pattern spouting water, on the left of the group, remain to be seen, while the roguish little Love, with bow and arrow, bearing the Albizzi's coat of arms, at Giovanni's feet, has been half effaced.

The wonder is that any portion of these beautiful works of art are now remaining, when we remember the vicissitudes which they have experienced, since the day when Sandro painted them in the fair Tuscan

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villa. In 1541, the country house of the Tornabuoni passed into other hands, and the frescoes upon which the Florentine master had lavished so much thought and skill, were hidden under a coat of whitewash, which was only removed in 1873, after an interval of three hundred years. The villa was at that time the property of Dr. Lemmi, when, by a lucky accident, the fragments of Sandro's frescoes were first discovered, and his long-lost creations were once more brought to light. On the opposite wall, traces of a third painting were also found, containing the portrait of the bridegroom's father, Giovanni Tornabuoni, with a little girl, probably his young daughter Lodovica, who figures in Ghirlandajo's frescoes, decked in a sumptuous robe of gold brocade. Nine years later, in 1884, the two frescoes described above were sold to the French Government and removed to the Louvre, where they now occupy a conspicuous place at the head of the staircase leading to the Picture Gallery. Even in their present ruined condition, torn away as they have been from their beautiful surroundings in the Florentine villa, Sandro's compositions have a grace and a freshness which nothing can destroy.

The same tragic fate which attended Giuliano and his beloved mistress, overtook the youthful pair whose happy union is celebrated in these frescoes. Giovanna died a few years after her marriage, in giving birth to a third child; and in August, 1497, when he was only thirty-two, her husband was put to death with four other leading citizens, Bernardo del Nero, Niccolo Ridolfi, Giovanni Cambi, and Giannozzo Pucci, for conspiring to bring back Piero dei Medici. It was a political crime for which the Piagnoni leaders were to pay dearly, and the untimely end of this brilliant and popular youth was lamented by citizens of every rank and opinion.

"And so these five men were condemned," writes that staunch follower of Fra Girolamo, the chemist Luca Landucci, "to the grief of the whole city. Everyone wondered at this, and could hardly believe such a thing to be possible. And they were put to death the same night, and I could not help shedding tears when I saw that young Lorenzo borne past the Tornaquinci houses on a bier. . . . But all things are in the hands of God.¹ May His will be done!" Such were

¹ "Diario fiorentina da Luca Landucci," p. 157.





*Scene from the tale of Nostagio degli Onesti, from the picture by, Giovanni di Domenico
in the collection of H. Spivak.*

CASA PUCCI

the sharp and sudden changes which startled the hearts of Florentine citizens in those troubled times. Well might the poet sing:

Di doman non c' e' certezza.

Another wedding which excited great interest among the friends of the Medici was that of Pier Francesco Bini and Lucrezia, the daughter of Lorenzo's strong and loyal supporter Francesco Pucci. Their nuptials took place in 1487, a year after Lorenzo Tornabuoni's marriage, and Botticelli, who had displayed his skill in so remarkable a manner on that occasion, was desired to paint four panels for the decoration of a cassone or wedding chest. Vasari, who saw these paintings in Casa Pucci, describes them as consisting of small figures, in which Boccaccio's *novella* of Nastagio degli Onesti is told in four pictures, "di pittura *molto vaga e bella*." The panels bear the arms of the Pucci and Bini family, quartered with the diamond rings and *palle* of the Medici to which these houses were allied, and three laurel boughs in honour of the Magnifico are introduced in the shields painted on the pillars of the banquet hall in the last panel, representing the marriage feast. This time the theme selected by the Pucci, as Vasari has recorded, was Boccaccio's weird tale of Nastagio degli Onesti's loves, and the spectral huntsman, whose hounds are still said to haunt the pine forest of Ravenna. Sandro himself no doubt designed these panels, which are marked by all the charm of his fancy, and probably himself superintended their execution in his *bottega*. But the greater part of the actual painting is the work of his scholars, and Mr. Berenson has recently pronounced them to be the joint production of Jacopo del Sellaio and of Ghirlandajo's old pupil, Bartolommeo di Giovanni,¹ who had lately passed into the rival workshop and become one of Sandro's most able assistants. The romantic scene of the banquet in the forest, suddenly interrupted by the appearance of the spectral huntsman and the hounds devouring the naked bride, with the pines growing along the seashore and the dishes and goblets falling off the table in confusion, was evidently designed by Botticelli himself. The weird tale must have appealed to his imagination in a peculiar manner, and here and there we seem to recognize his own hand in some face or form, such,

¹ "Alunno di Domenico," "Burlington Magazine," March, 1903.

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for instance, as the charming figure of Nastagio's mistress, in the act of rising from the festive board, struck with horror at the sight before her eyes. These interesting panels were long the property of the well-known connoisseur, Mr. Leyland, after whose death the series was dispersed. Three of them are now in the collection of M. Spiridion of Paris; the fourth, representing Nastagio's wedding feast, is still in this country and belongs to Mr. Vernon Watney.

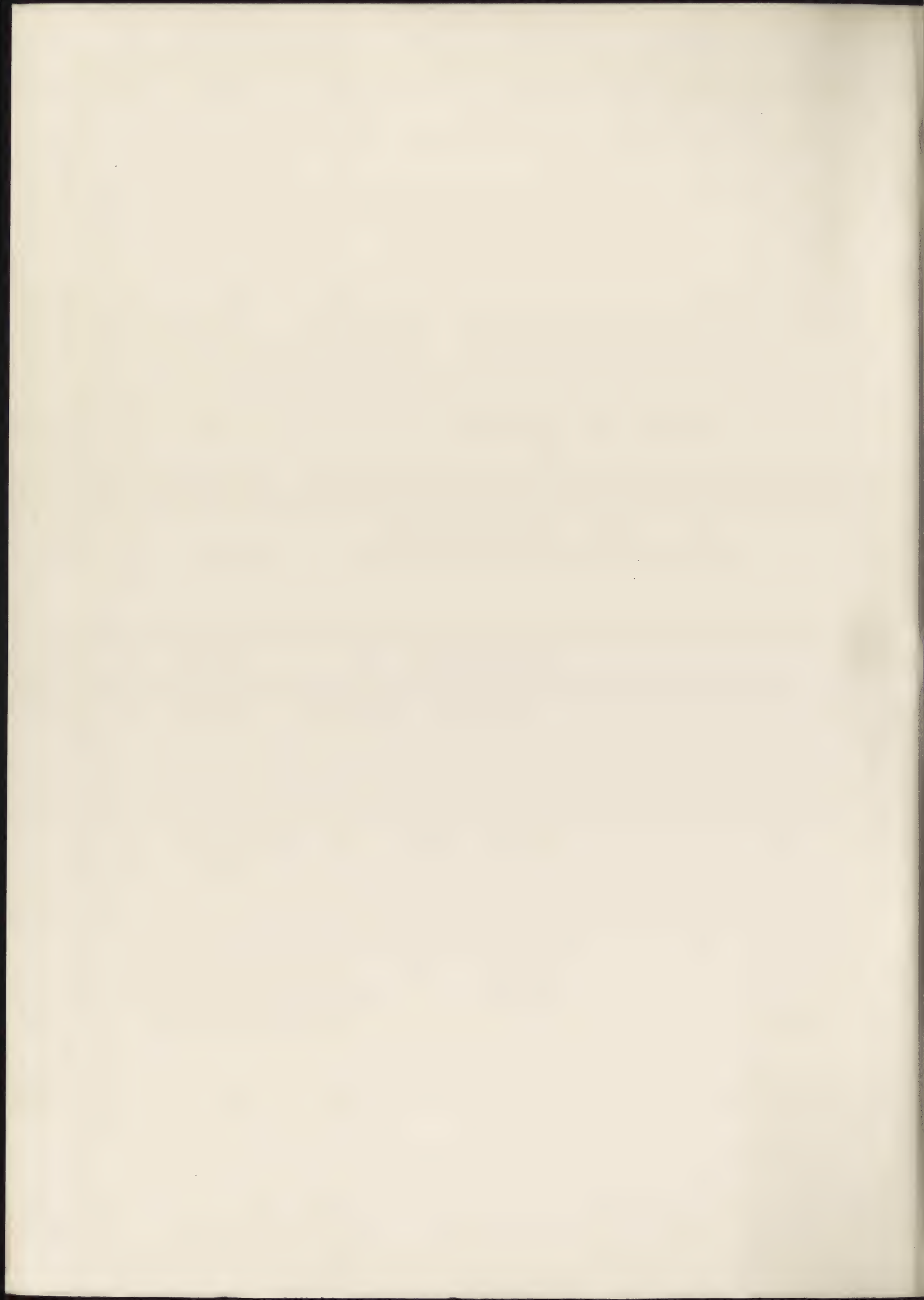
A large number of similar paintings, dealing with the myths of Ovid or the romances of mediaeval times, were produced in Florence during the last decades of the fifteenth century. Most of these were executed by Botticelli's pupils, who took cartoons or sketches of their master, and adapted them freely to their own uses. Such, for instance, was the painting of the allegory of *Abundance* at Chantilly, in which some unknown scholar has taken the figure in Sandro's beautiful drawing of the Malcolm collection, and added the child running before the woman carrying faggots, from the fresco of the *Purification of the Leper* in the Sixtine Chapel. Such, too, were Bartolommeo di Giovanni's panels of *Jason* at Colchis, formerly in the Ashburnham collection; his *Battle of the Centaurs and Lapithae*, belonging to Mrs. Austen at Horsmonden; his *Story of Io* at Langton in Scotland, and his *Marriage of Thetis* and *Triumph of Venus* in the Louvre.¹ We may also recall the fascinating panels of the *History of Esther* at Chantilly and the *Death of Lucrezia* in the Pitti, by that scholar of Botticelli whom Mr. Berenson has dubbed Amico di Sandro; and the delightful *Story of Orpheus and Eurydice*, a subject plainly suggested by Poliziano's successful drama of Orfeo, painted by Jacopo del Sellajo, and recently exhibited at the Carfax Gallery in London. These panels, most of which were intended for the decoration of wedding-chests and other furniture, are of great interest as illustrating the domestic life of contemporary Florence, and showing the close and increasing connection that existed between the humanists and painters of Lorenzo's times. To us they are of especial value because they afford a fresh proof of Sandro's sympathy with the intellectual tendencies of his age, and of the singular attraction which the classical myths of Greece and Rome had for this Renaissance master. And they show that his treat-

¹ Berenson in the "Burlington Magazine," 1903, p. 12.



ABUNDANCE.

From the Drawing in the British Museum.



A COMING CHANGE

ment of these old legends, so far removed from Greek art, so wholly individual in style and character, appealed in a peculiar manner to the imagination of his contemporaries, and had, during the painter's lifetime, acquired an extraordinary popularity in his native city. But, ere long, a great and sudden change was to pass over the life of Florence, and in that change Sandro was to bear his part, and take his place in the front rank of the new movement. The painter of Giuliano's *Giostra* and Lorenzo's *Pallas*, of the *Venus* and *Primavera*, the intimate friend of Poliziano and Tommaso Soderini, was to become a Piagnone or "sniveller"—a partisan of the sect of Fra Girolamo, as Vasari contemptuously terms it—and was to devote the art of his last days to the cause of Christ and the Frate.

CHAPTER XIII

1484—1488

Botticelli as a painter of Madonnas.—Chronology of his *tondi* and altar-pieces.—The *Magnificat*.—The Poldi-Pezzoli Madonna.—The *Madonna of the Pomegranate*.—The Bardi and S. Barnabà altar-pieces.—The *Coronation of the Virgin* in San Marco.—Probable date of its execution.—Recent theories on the subject.

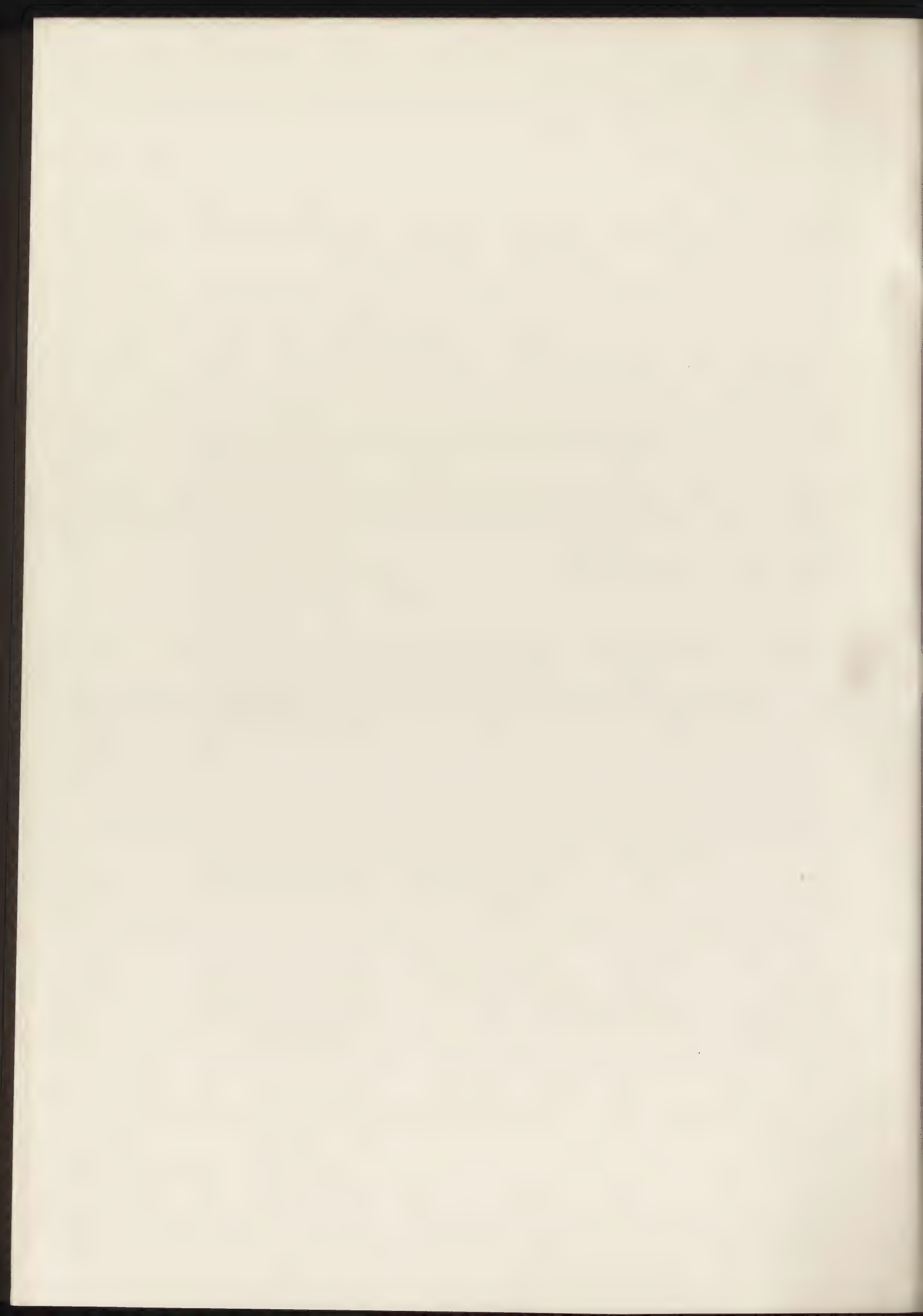
BOTTICELLI is pre-eminently the artist of a transitional period. He stands at a point where the Middle Ages and the Renaissance meet, and Gothic and classical motives are blended together in Florentine art. If, on the one side, he handles antique myths in the mystic fashion of mediaeval poets, with the quaint grace of a Chaucer or a Spenser, on the other he brings the study of Nature and knowledge of classical art to adorn the Christian themes which were still popular in his day. In this once more he reflects the intellectual tendencies of the age, the aspirations of the Platonists of Lorenzo's Court, who, like Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola strove to prove that the doctrines of Christ and Plato were the same. Christian traditions were still supreme in art, and while Sandro acquired renown as the painter of classical myths, dear to the humanists of the Medici circle, at the same time he excelled in the representation of sacred subjects and execution of altar-pieces for churches and convents. We have seen in how many different forms he repeated his favourite theme of the *Adoration of the Magi*, during the earlier part of his career; we must now consider the altar-pieces and *tondi* of Madonnas with Saints and Angels, which belong to his later years. However popular Botticelli's renderings of Greek gods and goddesses, of nymphs and heroes, may have been in his lifetime, it is as the painter of Madonnas that he is above all remembered to-day.

In the absence of dates and documents, it is impossible to speak positively of the exact order in which Sandro's well-known Madonnas were painted. It is a question on which the best critics seldom agree,



Spooner.

MADONNA AND CHILD WITH ST. JOHN.
Louvre.





MAGNIFICAT.
Uffizi, Florence.



THE MAGNIFICAT

and which still remains in the main uncertain. We can only put together the little information that is to be found for our guidance, and draw our conclusions accordingly. With the exception of the damaged fresco of the *Madonna della Vannella* and of the Chigi picture, no works of this description from Sandro's early period have come down to us. The Madonnas which formerly bore his name at Naples, in the Spedale degli Innocenti of Florence, and at Santa Maria Nuova, were undoubtedly executed by his scholars, and one of the most popular, the *Virgin with the Child and the Infant St. John*, in the Louvre (No. 1296), is now recognized to be the work of an inferior hand. This ill-drawn but attractive group, with its lovely background of roses and cypresses, was evidently executed by a follower of Botticelli, in the days when the artist's fame was at its height, from one of his master's old cartoons. A considerable number of genuine paintings of Madonnas, and an infinite amount of imitations and repetitions by scholars and assistants, on the contrary, belong to the last twenty years of Sandro's artistic career. But it is a difficult, not to say impossible, task, to determine the chronology of these works and to divide the pictures that were painted in the eighties from those which belong to the nineties.

Foremost among them, however, both in point of merit and in order of execution we may place the *Madonna of the Magnificat* or the *Coronation of the Virgin*, as it is still called in the Uffizi Catalogue



Photograph—Houghton.

THE VIRGIN OF THE MAGNIFICAT
(UFFIZI)

SANDRO BOTTICELLI

(No. 1267, *bis*), the most famous and the most perfect of all Sandro's Madonnas. In beauty of design, in glowing richness and lovely transparency of colour, in exquisite finish and intensity of spiritual feeling, this *tondo* surpasses all Botticelli's other Virgins. The circular form had long been popular in Tuscan sculpture. Donatello, Luca della Robbia, Desiderio da Settignano and Mino da Fiesole had all employed it in



[Photograph—Houghton.]

ANGELS FROM THE MAGNIFICAT
(UFFIZI)

turn for the carved Madonnas which adorned the shrines and smiled down on the passers-by, in the busy thoroughfares and narrow streets of Florence. Fra Filippo, as we have seen, had been the first to introduce the *tondo* in painting, but Botticelli understood better than any other master how to adapt it to the uses of pictorial art, and this picture of the *Magnificat* is an admirable example of the skill with which he knew how to develop an artistic motive. John Addington Symonds has suggested that Sandro, who loved flowers, and introduces fluttering roses alike into his faery dreams of Greek nymphs, and visions of Paradise, may have borrowed the composition of this picture from "the corolla of an open rose,"¹ and the way in which the curving lines of bowed heads, interlaced arms and meeting hands converge, bears out this idea. The same pattern is repeated in the flowing lines of the Virgin's veil and mantle, in the gauzy draperies that float about the crown suspended on high, and the windings of the stream that runs through the distant valley.

¹ J. A. Symonds, "Renaissance in Italy, The Fine Arts," p. 185.

THE MAGNIFICAT

The Carmelite friar, again, had introduced curly-headed boy-angels into his groups of the Madonna and Child, and Sandro, improving on his master's conception, surrounds his Virgin with a troop of lovely children with curling locks and wistful faces. But the leading motive of the picture is altogether original.

The Virgin, robed in a green mantle embroidered with gold, and wearing a transparent white veil over her fair tresses, is in the act of dipping her pen into the ink, to write her song of praise on the leaves of the missal which is held open by angel hands. Two other boy-angels hold a golden crown above her head, and as the heavenly light streams over her, the Child on her knee looks up in her face with a sudden flash of inspiration. Then the full significance of the great sacrifice dawns upon the Mother's soul, and at the very moment when she realizes all her glory, when angels crown her brows and the Child guides her pen to write the words that pronounce her blessed among women, the sword pierces her heart with its mysterious foretaste of coming agony.

M. Müntz, who made a careful study of the points of connection between Botticelli and Leonardo, believes that the head of the Virgin in the *Magnificat* was borrowed from a sketch by Leonardo, which is now at Windsor, but although the attitude is similar, the resemblance of the features is but very slight, and the spiritual intensity of expression in the bowed face of Sandro's Madonna is far beyond anything in Leonardo's work. The mystic poetry of Botticelli's soul has borne him to heights as yet undreamt of in his great rival's philosophy, and in this wonderful little painting he has attained an ideal of divine sorrow and tenderness which remains unsurpassed in the annals of Christian art.

Signor Supino and the other critics who accept M. Müntz's suggestion, ascribe the *Magnificat* to the period immediately preceding Botticelli's visit to Rome, when Leonardo was still in Florence. But the mastery of design and rare degree of technical perfection in the painting incline us to place it a few years later, soon after the completion of the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, about the same time as the *Birth of Venus* and the *Mars and Venus*, and just before the altar-piece which he painted for the Bardi family in 1485.

This Madonna, enthroned between St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, which originally adorned the Bardi Chapel in

SANDRO BOTTICELLI

Brunellesco's newly-restored church of San Spirito, is the only one of Sandro's altar-pieces to which a date can be assigned with certainty. In a book of accounts, recently discovered by Signor Supino among the Archives of the Guicciardini family,¹ there is an entry relating to this altar-piece. A record is made of a payment of twenty-four florins made by Giovanni dei Bardi, to Giuliano di Sangallo, on the 7th of February, 1484-1485, for carving a frame which was supplied by him to a panel painted by "Sandro del Botticello." "In S. Spirito of Florence," writes Vasari, "Sandro painted an altar-piece for the Chapel of the Bardi, on which he bestowed great pains and worked with remarkable success, and which contains some olive and palm trees executed with the utmost love." Giuliano, we know, was one of Lorenzo dei Medici's favourite architects and engineers, who had just finished building his new villa of Poggio a Cajano, and whom the Magnifico soon afterwards sent to Naples, as the best master whom he could find to design King Ferrante's new palace. He began life as a wood-carver, and always retained the name of *legnaiuolo*, which appears in this document. That he was a great admirer of Sandro's art we know from his own drawings, in which he imitates the figures in the frescoes of the Villa Lemmi, and his name may still be seen on the back of the Botticellian *tondo* of the Madonna in the National Gallery, which was once his property.

A second entry in Giovanni dei Bardi's account-book tells us that on the 3rd of August, 1485, Sandro himself received "the sum of seventy-five gold florins, thirty-eight for the wood of the panel and the gold which he had employed, two florins more for the azure which he had used, and thirty-five for the work of his brush."

The fine composition and admirable execution of this altar-piece, which is now one of the greatest ornaments of the Berlin Gallery; its rich colouring and high finish, agree with all that we know of Botticelli's work at this period, and justify us in placing the *Madonna of the Magnificat* about the same time. Few of his paintings are so well preserved and retain so much of their original splendour. The Virgin is seated on a richly-carved throne, raised on a pedestal of coloured marbles, under a bower of luxuriant verdure, in which the foliage, palm, cypress and myrtle are all mingled. The Baptist, a noble and ascetic

¹ "Sandro Botticelli," I. B. Supino, p. 94.

THE BERLIN MADONNA

figure, holding a cross in one hand and pointing with the other to a scroll bearing the words *Ecce Agnus Dei*, stands on the left of the throne; the Evangelist, a venerable and white-bearded old man, holds a pen and an open book in his hands, as if in the act of writing the Gospel, which tells how the Word was made God and dwelt among us. The Virgin's face closely resembles that of the goddess in the *Birth of Venus*, and wears the same gentle and pensive expression; while the laughing Child, stretching out both little arms to his mother, is one of the few joyous and happy types of childhood which Sandro has given us. All the details of the background—the thickly-woven boughs of palm and cypress and myrtle, which form a canopy above the Virgin and her attendant Saints, the tall white lilies and sprays of olive in enamelled jars, and the bowls of red and white roses set on the marble parapet—are painted with exquisite care. This combination of natural beauty and artistic ornament produces the finest decorative effect and, as in the *Birth of Venus* and the *Magnificat*, the lavish use of gold in the foliage and draperies heightens the splendour of the whole.



Photograph—Hanfstaengl.

THE MADONNA, WITH ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
AND ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST
(BERLIN MUSEUM)

Closely related to this Berlin Madonna is the large and important altar-piece of the *Virgin and Saints* in the Accademia of Florence, which Sandro painted probably a year or two later for the convent church of S. Barnabà. Here the Madonna is seated on a lofty throne, flanked by stately marble pillars and other architectural details of classical type. The broad and simple folds of drapery, and the white veil rest-

SANDRO BOTTICELLI

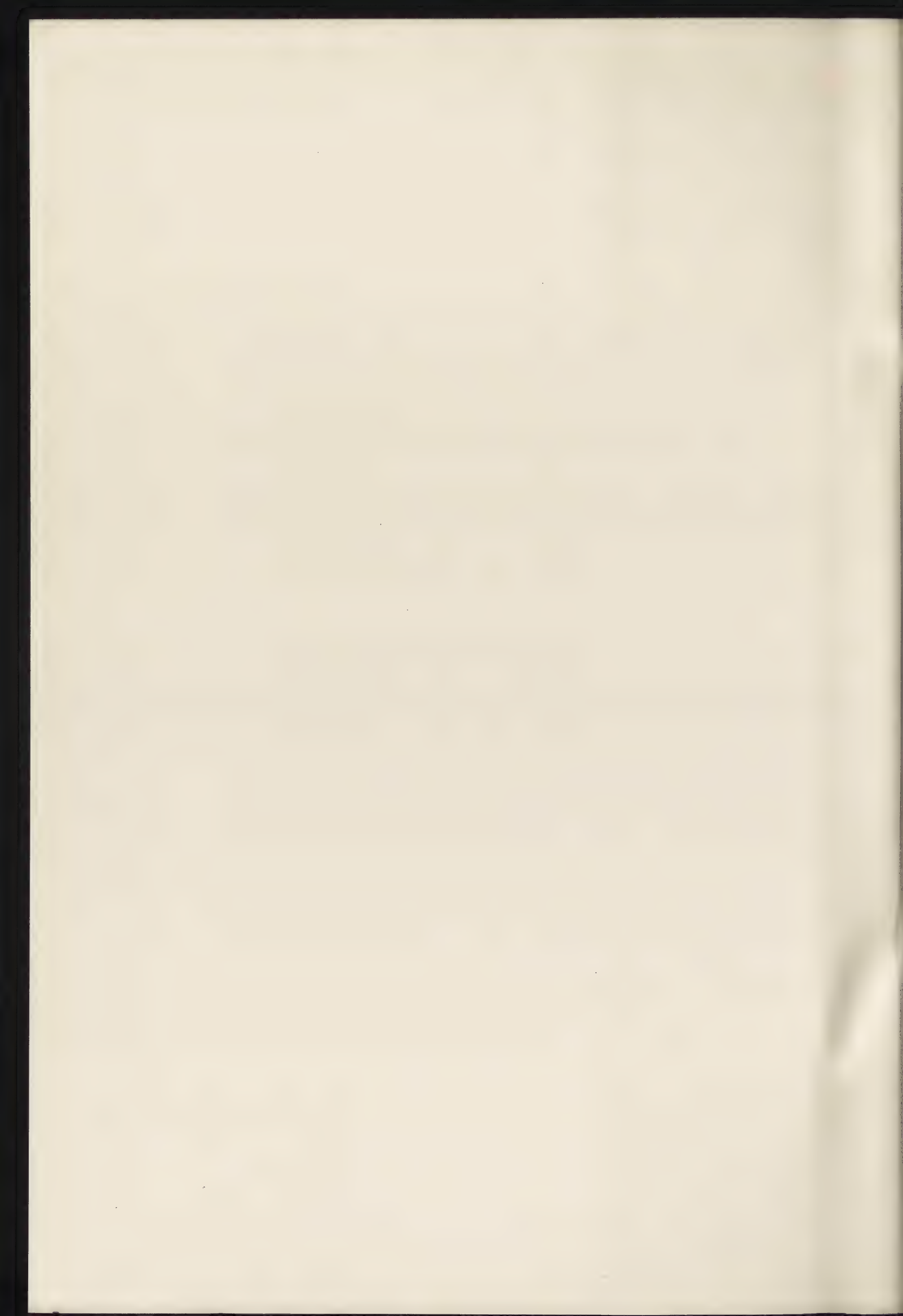
ing lightly on her hair, recall the Berlin picture. The Virgin's features also resemble those of the last-named Madonna, but the eyes, instead of looking down, as in most of the earlier pictures, meet ours in grave and sorrowful appeal. Two winged angels, standing at her side, draw back the crimson velvet hangings of the canopy overhead, while two others gaze sadly at the instruments of the Passion—the nails and crown of thorns which they hold up in their hands. The Child, of a type evidently derived from the little boy who is seen walking by his mother's side in the Sixtine fresco of the *Journey of Moses*, stands on his mother's knees, lifting his hand in blessing, and his countenance seems to have caught the sadness which haunts the angel-faces, as he muses sorrowfully over these tokens of his coming Passion. On the wide marble pavement at the foot of the throne are six Saints, in whom the painter brings before us six distinct types of struggling and sanctified humanity. On the one hand we see the heavenly warrior Michael, winged and clad in shining armour, his youthful grace and beauty forming a marked contrast to the aged scholar, St. Augustine, and the haggard prophet of the desert, St. John the Baptist, who stand beside him. On the other, we have St. Barnabas, the strong-featured man of action with a keen, vigorous face and long black beard; a mild-looking St. Ambrose, in mitre and ecclesiastical robes; and the virgin-martyr, St. Katharine, clad in a blue robe and bearing the palm of victory in her hand. Both in type and attitude, this gentle saint with the dreamy eyes and contemplative expression on her fair face, strongly resembles the reclining nymph in the panel of *Mars and Venus*, and belongs to the same family as the young woman carrying faggots in the Sixtine fresco, and the Graces in Giovanna degli Albizzi's wedding picture. This altar-piece has suffered from restoration, and the hand of assistants is plainly visible in some portions. The tones of colour are gay and vivid, but less harmonious than in most of Sandro's works, and the figure of the Baptist is awkward and ungainly, and will not bear comparison with the noble drawing of the same saint by the master's pen in the Uffizi. A line from the thirty-third canto of Dante's "Paradiso" is inscribed on the highest step of the Madonna's throne :

Vergine, madre, figlia del tuo figlio,



Houghton

THE MADONNA OF S. BARNABA.
Accademia, Florence.



A PREDELLA

as if this and the following line,

Umile ed alta più che creatura,

contained the thought to which the painter owed his inspiration, and which he wished to leave upon the mind of the spectator.

The predella to this altar-piece is also in the Accademia and consists of four small paintings. One of these is a *Christ rising from the Tomb*,

with the instruments of the Passion above, and a group of *Christ bearing the Cross*, followed by holy women on the way to Calvary, in the background. These subjects are evidently introduced as a sign of the fulfilment of the prophetic symbols of the Passion, which are seen in the central panel. The other three relate to the Saints who appear in the altar-piece. St. Ambrose is seen clad in his pontifical robes, lying in state on his funereal couch, with two figures, one of whom is clad in Oriental dress, standing in the background. In the second, Salome, wearing a green robe, advances, bearing a charger with the Baptist's head, while the prison gates and the ramparts of the fortress of Macherus are seen on the left. In the third,



Photograph—Houghton.

SANTA CATARINA FROM THE MADONNA
DI S. BARNABA
(ACCADEMIA, FLORENCE)

we have the old legend of the Vision of St. Augustine. The Saint of Hippo stands on the seashore, meditating on the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and fixes his eyes attentively on a child before him, who, kneeling on the beach, is trying to fill a hole with sea-water. According to the legend, Augustine one day asked a child, whom he saw engaged in this manner, what he was doing. The boy replied that he was trying

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to pour the sea into the hole which he had dug. "But that is impossible!" returned the Saint. "It is less impossible," was the child's answer, "than to solve the mystery which is troubling your thoughts."

The personality of this great saint and doctor of the Western Church seems to have had an especial attraction for Botticelli, who introduces Augustine repeatedly into his altar-pieces. Besides the



Photograph—Houghton.]

MADONNA OF THE POMEGRANATE
(UFFIZI)

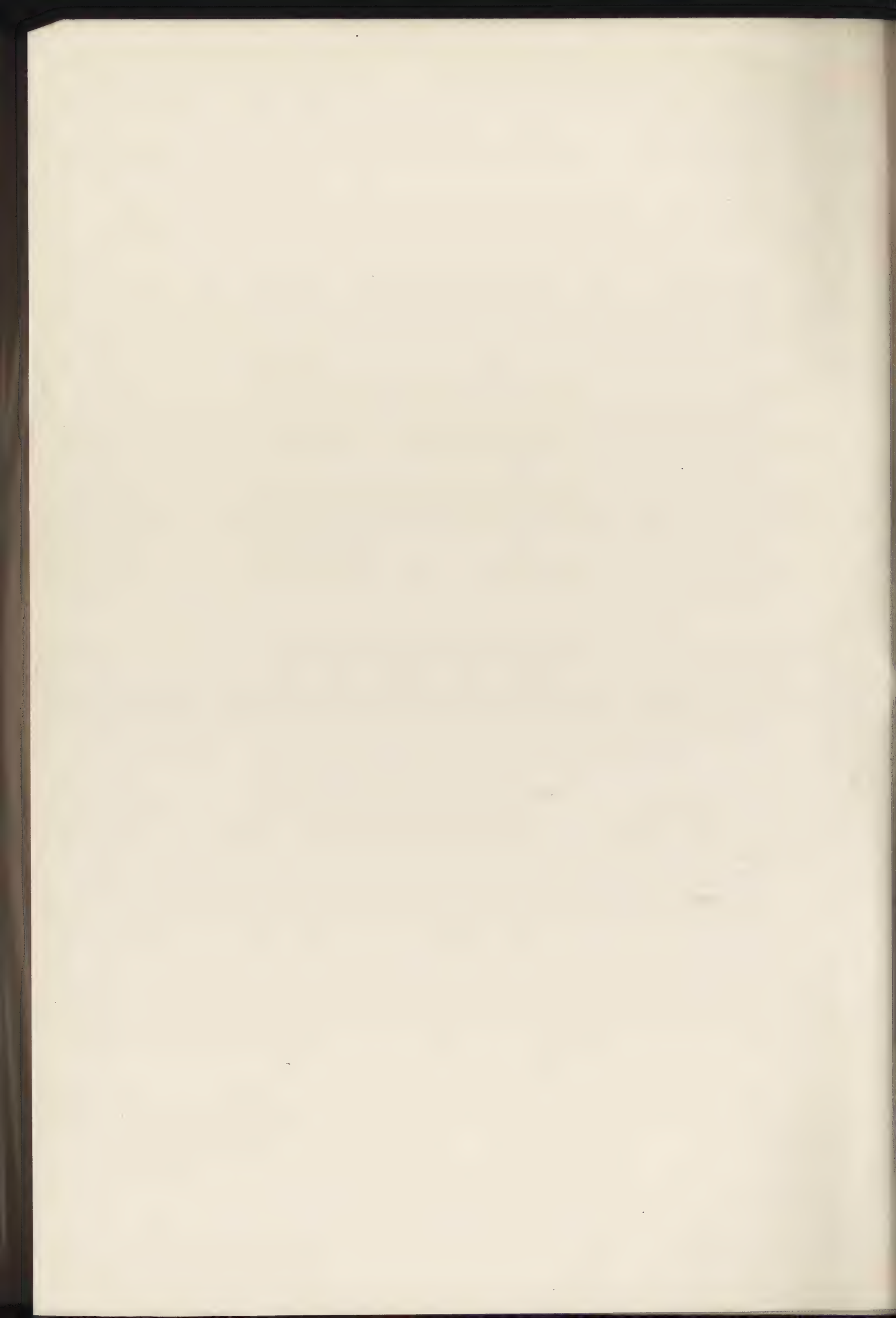
fresco in Ognissanti, he painted another figure of the saint in his cell, seated under an arched recess, with a hanging in front, engaged in writing, while the floor is strewn with fragments of paper. Here the type of the face recalls the Augustine of the S. Barnabà picture and the *Coronation of the Virgin* in San Marco, while the ornamental details of the architecture are in the style of the master's later works. The wall is adorned with classical medallions touched with gold, similar to the basreliefs in the *Allegory of Calumny*. This carefully painted little picture, now in the Uffizi (No. 1179), was first discovered

by Morelli, who recognized in it one of those "most beautiful paintings of small subjects" by Sandro, which are mentioned by Antonio Billi and the Anonimo Gaddiano. Both of these writers also allude to another "work of rare beauty," by our master's hand, a little *St. Jerome*, which some critics identify with a small picture that is still the property of the Marchese Farmola in Florence. The aged saint is represented in the act of receiving his last communion from



Anderson.

SAINT AUGUSTINE.
Uffizi, Florence.



MADONNA OF THE POMEGRANATE

a priest, under a rude thatched hut. A fine drawing of this saint clad in his cardinal's robes, and holding a pen in his right hand and a book open before him, is also in the Uffizi.

Both the Mother and Child of the S. Barnabà altar-piece meet us again in Sandro's *Madonna of the Pomegranate*, that beautiful *tondo* which hangs opposite the *Magnificat* in the Uffizi. This picture formed part of the Grand Ducal collection, and still retains its original frame, adorned with golden lilies on a blue ground. It may, therefore, have belonged to the Medici, but is generally supposed to be the *tondo* of the Madonna with angels in the Franciscan Church, outside the gate of San Miniato, which Vasari describes as a most beautiful work. "*Il quale fui tenuto cosa bellissima.*"¹ This description, however, may equally well refer to the Virgin of the *Magnificat*, regarding whose origin we have as yet no certain knowledge. In form and general treatment, in the transparent veil which rests on the Ma-



Photograph—Houghton.]

HEAD OF THE MADONNA OF THE
POMEGRANATE
(UFFIZI)

donna's golden tresses, in the lovely faces and curly locks of the six child-angels, who press round her with their open choir-books and blossoming lilies, this picture resembles the *Magnificat*. But there are several variations in the composition. The eyes of both Mother and Child are fixed upon us. Mary holds the pomegranate which gives its name to the picture; the Child lays one hand upon the fruit and lifts

¹ "Vite," ed. Milanesi, vol. iv, p. 318.

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the other in blessing; while the golden rays which shed their radiance on the group, bear witness to his divine birth. The Madonna's face, in its sad and meditative expression, comes nearer to the Virgin of S. Barnabà, but the note of mournful yearning is still more prominent, and the angel-faces reflect the tender sadness in the countenance of both Mother and Child. The composition is as masterly in its way as that of the earlier *tondo*, but the colouring is in a lower key and everything points to a later date of execution. If this picture was painted at



Photograph—Anderson.]

MADONNA AND CHILD WITH ANGELS
(AMBROSIANA, MILAN)

the close of the eighties, the *tondo* which is now in the *Ambrosiana* at Milan, certainly belongs to the nineties. Here we have a new motive in the kneeling Virgin, who looks down in love and adoration on the Child held up before her by a child-angel, and beyond the marble parapet, a charming glimpse of river and woodland appears through the parted hangings of the canopy. The winged seraphs with streaming locks and fluttering draperies, hastening to draw back the curtains,

are a distinct reminiscence of the S. Barnabà altarpiece. But the angel-faces and forms are less delicate, and there is an air of haste and agitation in their rapid movements that already betrays the tendency to violent gesture and hurried action which marked the work of Sandro's declining years.

The Madonna in the Poldi-Pezzoli Gallery at Milan has more affinity with the Virgin of the *Magnificat* in feature and attitude, as well as in the careful finish of the execution, marred as it has been in places by the restorer's hand. Here Mary looks down with exquisite tenderness on the unconscious Child, who plays with the nails and

POLDI-PEZZOLI MADONNA

crown of thorns as he looks up in his mother's face, while she turns a page of the open missal. The expanse of clear sky and park-like landscape that is seen through the open casement behind her, recalls the Chigi Madonna, but is also seen in an *Annunciation* which was executed in his *bottega* about 1490. A variation of the Poldi-Pezzoli Madonna appears in another little picture now belonging to the well-known connoisseur, Mr. J. P.

Heseltine. Here both the attitude and face of the Virgin are nearly the same, and are certainly the master's work; but the little St. John the Baptist who kneels before the Child, with a staff in his hand and a halo round his brow, was probably added by an assistant. Both the wide and rocky landscape and the marble bas-relief which adorns the parapet, are in Botticelli's later manner. The work evidently belongs to the period when he painted *St. Augustine in his Cell* and the *Allegory of Calumny*, and when a large proportion of his work was left to the hand of assistants. This was certainly the case with the *Annunciation* which is now in the Uffizi

(No. 1316). As Vasari informs us,¹ this picture was painted for the Cistercians of Castello, whose chapter-house still contains Perugino's beautiful fresco of the *Crucifixion*. They were a prosperous and flourishing community towards the close of the fifteenth century, and in 1488 a Florentine citizen, Benedetto di Ser Giovanni Guardì, founded a chapel in their convent-church, which was dedicated to the Annuncia-



Photograph—Anderson.]

MADONNA AND CHILD
(POLDI-PEZZOLI GALLERY, MILAN)

¹ "Vite," ed. Milanesi, vol. iii, p. 314.

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tion. He afterwards employed Botticelli to paint an altar-piece for this chapel, probably about the time of its consecration by Bishop Pagagnotti, on the 26th of June, 1436, and paid him thirty florins for the work. After being lost for many years, the picture was discovered thirty-two years ago in a wayside shrine, which formerly belonged to the nuns of Santa Maria Maddalene dei Pazzi, the community who, during many years, occupied the ancient house of the Cistercian monks. It is not, however, considered genuine by either Morelli or Mr. Berenson, and was, at all events, partly the work of an assistant.

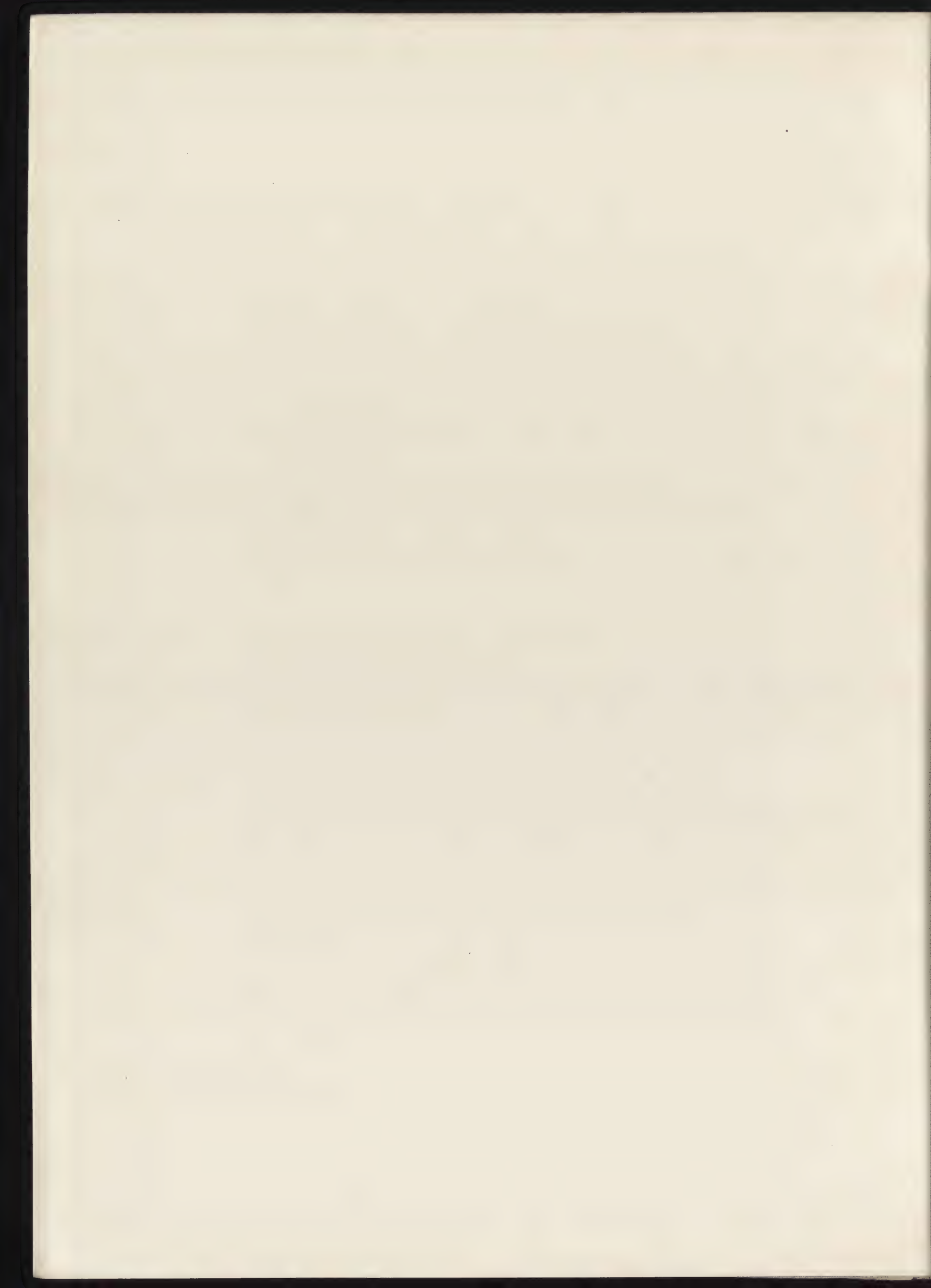
The conception of this birdlike angel, with the outstretched wings and flying draperies, newly alighted on the floor of the home of Nazareth, and the lowly, deprecating air of the Virgin may well have been due to Sandro. But the drawing is weak, the colouring is dull and gray, while the different parts of the composition, it is evident, have been borrowed from the master's other works. Both in type and gesture, the Madonna is a feeble copy of Our Lady in the large altar-piece of the *Coronation*, while the angel strongly resembles the little Baptist in Mr. Heseltine's picture, and the winding river in the distance recalls the landscape of the *Magnificat*.

There can, fortunately, be no doubt as to the genuineness of the great altar-piece which Sandro painted about the same time—the *Coronation of the Virgin* now in the Accademia (No. 73). This noble work, as we learn from Vasari, was ordered by the Arte di Porta San Maria, that is to say, the Guild of Silk Weavers and Goldsmiths, for the altar of the Company, in Savonarola's own convent-church of San Marco, and, in the biographer's words, was exceedingly well executed by the painter. The upper portion of the altar-piece is painted on a gold ground, as is the case with Fra Angelico's works, whom in some respects it resembles. In the lowly Virgin, bending, with hands humbly crossed on her heart, to receive the crown, and the venerable figure of God the Father, Sandro follows the traditional type. The bearded old man, wearing the triple tiara, belongs to the same family as the Popes and high priests in the Sixtine frescoes, the *St. Augustine* and *St. Ambrose* of the earlier altar-pieces; but the thrones of flame in the empyrean, and the troop of angels dancing hand in hand, in a tumult of exultant rapture, are purely of his own invention. Here all is stir and



Houghton.

CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN.
Accademia, Florence.



CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

movement, flying draperies and loose locks flutter on the breeze, hurrying feet fly past us on the clouds, showers of roses are wafted through the air, and one blue-robed seraph borne heavenwards by the irresistible might of love, darts up to Mary's side and seems to claim a share in her joy and triumph. In the green meadow below, four saints contemplate the vision that has dawned on their wondering sight with varying degrees of emotion. St. Jerome, in his cardinal's hat and robes, gazes on the opened heavens with straining eyes; and St. John, the beloved disciple, lifts his arm heavenwards in a fiery transport of love and yearning; while St. Augustine writes calmly in his book, and St. Eligius, the patron of the goldsmiths, lifts his hand in blessing as he muses on the great miracle that he has witnessed. The cupola of the Duomo rises in the distance, and a mass of shelving rocks, such as we see in the master's *Pallas and the Centaur* and the *Adoration of the Magi*, is seen on the right. The predella of this altar-piece consists of five small subjects bearing the usual relation to the chief personages in the picture. The *Annunciation*, that subject which Dante saw carved on the marble walls of Purgatory, with the angel who opens the gate of heaven to mortals:

L'Angel che venne in terra col decreto
Della molt' anni lagrimata pace
Ch' aperse il ciel dal suo lungo divieto,¹

is represented in the central panel, where a Virgin in a blue mantle receives the angelic salutation with hands meekly folded on her bosom. St. Augustine appears again as the type of the saintly student writing in his cell, St. Jerome, the penitent, is seen striking his breast as he kneels before the Crucifix in his cave. St. John walks by the sea-shore on the rocky isle of Patmos, rapt in his vision of the celestial Country; and St. Eligius, in work at his forge, is shoeing a horse which is led by the devil in the form of a richly-clad young woman wearing a green robe, while the horns peep out from under her flowing locks.

The date of this Coronation has been the subject of much controversy. Mr. Berenson believes it to have been painted as early as 1480, because of certain peculiarities which appear in the works of that period. Dr. Julius Meyer, on the contrary, places its execution as late

¹ "Purgatorio," x, 34.

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as 1447, and Signor Supino thinks that the dancing angels may have been suggested by the white-robed children who danced round the Bonfire of Vanities on the Piazza at the Carnival of 1496. The vehement action of the aged Evangelist, and the rapid flight of the circling seraphs seem to indicate that this *Coronation* belongs to Botticelli's



Photograph—Houghton.

DANCING ANGELS FROM THE CORONATION
OF THE VIRGIN
(ACCADEMIA, FLORENCE)

later period, when the serene beauty and repose of his earlier conceptions had given way to a more passionate and emotional mood. But within the last year new and unexpected light has been thrown on the subject. In the "Miscellanea d'Arte" for the year 1903, M. Jacques Mesnil published a passage which he had discovered in the convent records, describing the Chapel of the Arte di Porta San Maria, on the left side of the door of the church of S. Marco. "This chapel," writes the chronicler, "was known as the Chapel of St. Alò (Eligius) the patron of the goldsmiths, who belonged to the Guild of Silk Weavers, and gave a silver

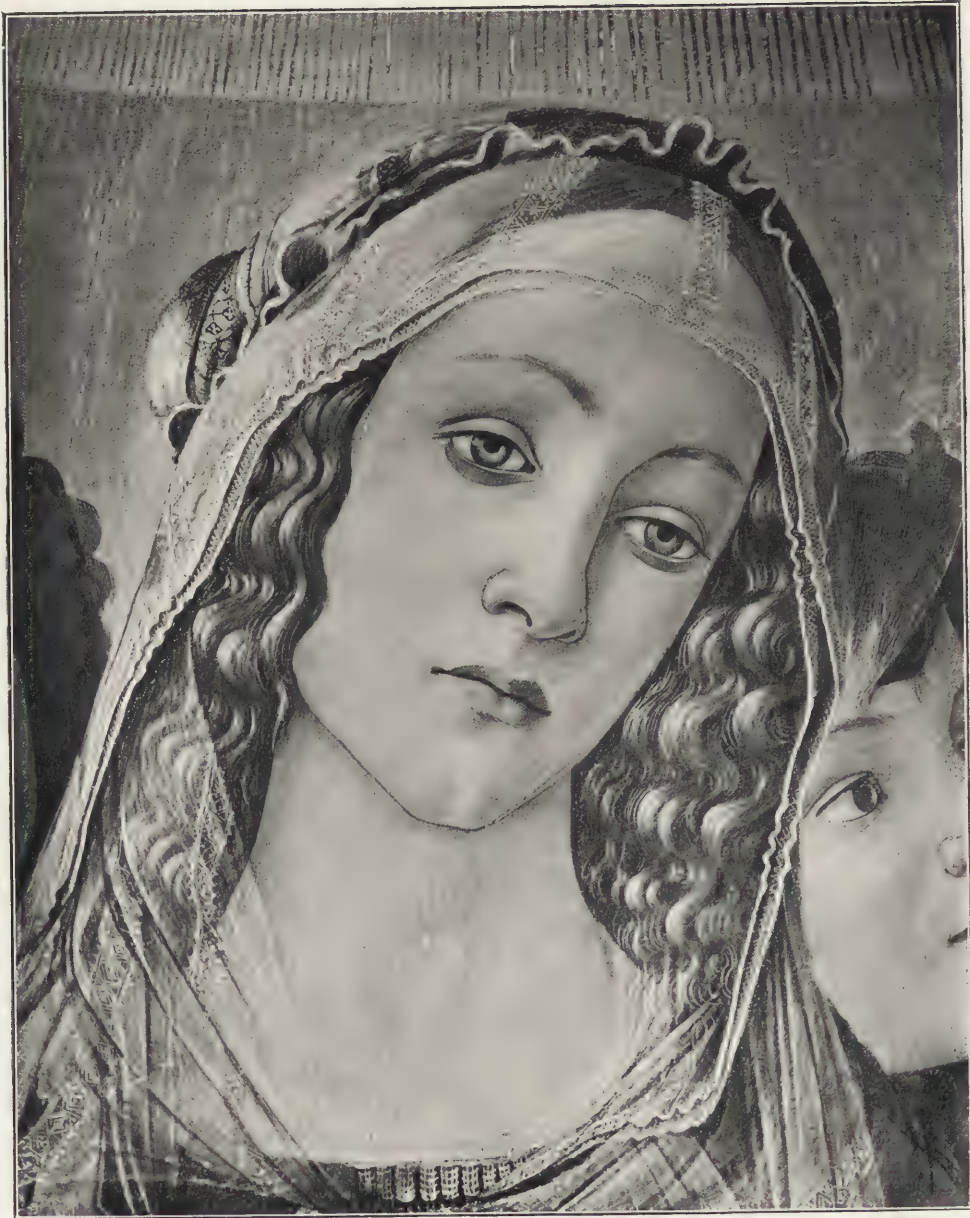
chalice with their arms and those of the Arte upon them to the said chapel." From very ancient days, the writer tells us, this Arte was the protector of the convent, and, on the Feast of San Marco, its members came to this church bearing torches, and a banner with their device was hung over the altar, and "if bad weather kept them away, they paid forty florins for the wax consumed. And the said Arte," he adds, "had an altar-piece painted for the sum of 100 gold florins,



Houghton.

SANTA CATERINA.
Accademia, Florence.

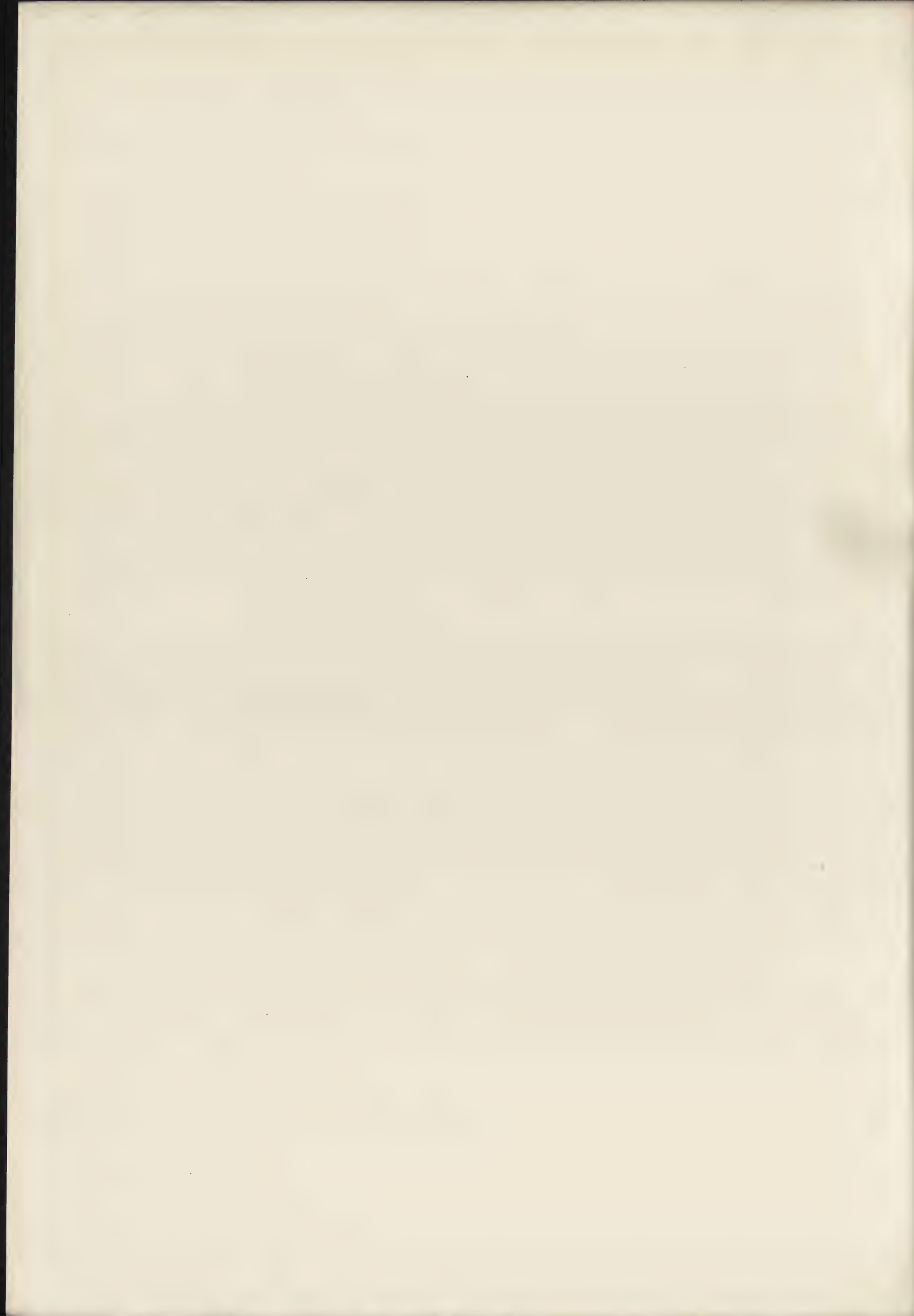




Houghton.

MADONNA OF THE POMEGRANATE.

Uffizi.



CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

together with the grating and frame, and keep it up at their expense." This passage, which confirms Vasari's statement, led M. Mesnil to make further researches in the books of the Guild of Silk Weavers, and he discovered the records kept in the last decades of the fifteenth century, by the Notary of the Arte, Ser Niccolò da Romena, in which a careful record is kept of the donations that were made and the expenses incurred by the company. Unfortunately the account-books for the eleven months between October, 1487, and September the 16th, 1488, is missing, and no mention of Sandro's altar-piece could be found in any of the other volumes.¹ From this we may fairly infer that the altar-piece which Botticelli painted by order of the Goldsmiths for their Patron Saint's chapel, was executed during that interval. The style and technique of the *Coronation* render this supposition highly probable, and the fact that Savonarola began his first series of sermons in the church of San Marco, in the Lent of 1489, lends especial interest to M. Mesnil's suggestion. If the *Coronation* was not executed under Fra Girolamo's direction, it was apparently finished about the time that his preaching began to attract general attention in Florence, and may have been the means of bringing Sandro into connection with the great Dominican friar whose teaching was to have so powerful an influence upon his art and life.

¹ Jacques Mesnil, "Miscellanea d'Arte," 1903, pp. 87-98.

CHAPTER XIV

1489—1498

The preaching and revival of Fra Girolamo Savonarola.—Lorenzo dei Medici recalls him to Florence.—His influence upon scholars and artists.—Botticelli becomes his follower.—Effect of the Friar's teaching upon his art.—The unfinished *Adoration* in the Uffizi.—The Munich Pietà.—Madonnas by Botticelli's followers.—Jacopo del Sellajo.—Amico di Sandro. Bartolommeo di Giovanni.

IN 1481, the Dominican friar, Fra Girolamo Savonarola, the grandson of a certain Michele Savonarola, who attained high reputation as court physician to the princes of the house of Este at Ferrara, first came to Florence and entered the convent of San Marco. During the next few years he was engaged in lecturing to the novices, and his eloquence and devotion attracted considerable attention among the noble families connected with this convent, which stood near the Medici palace, and had been rebuilt and endowed by Cosimo dei Medici. Botticelli's constant patrons, the Vespucci, were strong supporters of this Dominican community. A portrait of the Archbishop of Florence, St. Antonine, the saintly Prior of the convent and friend of Fra Angelico, was introduced in Ghirlandajo's fresco of the Vespucci in Ognissanti, and Giorgio Vespucci, who employed Sandro to paint the fresco of St. Augustine in that church, himself, as we have seen, joined the Dominican Order, and became a friar of San Marco. But a course of Lent sermons, which Fra Girolamo preached in the church of San Lorenzo, failed to meet with popular success, and his superiors sent him to preach at San Gimignano and in the cities of Lombardy. Here he met the brilliant scholar, Pico della Mirandola, who was so deeply impressed by the Dominican friar's preaching that he begged Lorenzo dei Medici to recall Fra Girolamo to Florence. "Lorenzo," writes a contemporary, "willing to gratify the Count, for whom he had a singular affection, sent for his secretary, Ser Piero da Bibbiena, and bade him write his commands to the Lombard Prior of the Order of St. Dominic. Then

SAVONAROLA

he turned to the Count, saying: "Since you know that I am always ready to serve you with goodwill and good wit, your Excellency shall compose the letter after your own fashion, and my secretary shall write it out, and seal it with my seal. This was done. And it befell Lorenzo as it befell Pharaoh, whose daughter rescued the infant Moses and whose father was doomed to be damned by the act of the child whom she had brought up."¹ This statement is confirmed by the following entry in Lorenzo's register of correspondence, 1489, April, 29th day. To the General of the Preaching friars for the recall of Fra Hieronimo da Ferrara."²

Accordingly, Fra Girolamo returned to Florence at the Magnifico's bidding, and began his first lectures on the Revelation of St. John, sitting under a damask-rose tree in the convent garden of San Marco. Here the number of his hearers increased so rapidly that on the 1st of August he ascended the pulpit in the convent church, which was thronged with attentive listeners, eager to hear this new preacher who was the friend of Pico. Soon his sermons became so famous that the church of San Marco could no longer contain the crowds who flocked to hear him, and in Lent, 1491, he preached that wonderful course of sermons in the Duomo which stirred Florence to its depths. The fiery eloquence of the preacher, the boldness with which he denounced the corruption of the clergy, the sins of men in high places both of Church and State, had a strange fascination. The most distinguished scholars and artists of Lorenzo's immediate circle, his intimate friends and companions, were Fra Girolamo's most constant hearers and greatest admirers. Marsilio Ficino openly expressed his admiration for the Frate's teaching; Angelo Poliziano was converted by his words, and when he died in 1494, begged to be buried in the Dominican garb. Pico della Mirandola—Lorenzo's beloved Pico, whom he sent for on his deathbed that he might die happy—breathed his last in Savonarola's arms. The Latin poet and humanist, Ugolino Verino, addressed a Latin letter to the Frate, expressing his agreement with his views of true poetry, and Girolamo Benivieni gave up writing carnival songs to compose hymns and lauds for the children of San Marco. Lorenzo

¹ "Magliabecchiana," Codex I, vol. viii, p. 43.

² "Archivio Medicio," Codex 63, quoted by Prof. Villari, "Life of Savonarola," p. 88.

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himself, although he might smile at the Friar's prophecies and look with some misgivings at his methods, was strongly attracted by his personality. He made friendly advances towards him on several occasions, and when he was dying, sent for the Prior of San Marco and asked for his last blessing, saying that he was the only honest friar whom he knew.

If the frequent allusions to Plato and other classical writers, that we find in Savonarola's sermons, show how many scholars and poets were among his audience, the bold rebukes which he addressed to painters and sculptors, prove that artists of all ranks and ages flocked to hear him. Far from being an enemy to the fine arts, Savonarola, as Rio long ago maintained, and as Professor Villari and other modern writers have clearly proved, admired and encouraged painting and commended the practice of art earnestly to the novices of San Marco. But he was never tired of dwelling on the divine origin of beauty and its relation to moral goodness. "Take two women of equal beauty," he says in one of his Lent sermons on the Prophets, "let one be good, modest and pure, the other a bad character, and you will see the good woman shine with angelic loveliness, and will notice that she will be the most beloved of all men, and that even the eyes of carnally-minded men will be drawn to her." And he was constantly blaming painters for representing persons, notorious for their bad lives, as Virgins and saints. "We find young men," he says, "going about saying of this one and the other, there is a Magdalen or a Virgin, that is a St. John! and then you paint their faces in the churches, which is a profane and wicked practice. You painters do very wrong, and if you knew as I do the scandal that you cause, you would certainly act differently. Do you think that the Virgin should be painted as you paint her? I tell you she was clothed as a humble maid."¹ Many of the foremost artists of the day, Baccio della Porta, better known by his Dominican name of Fra Bartolommeo, Lorenzo di Credi, and the sculptor, Baccio di Montelupo, were his devoted followers. The great architect, Simone Pollaiuolo, Antonio's nephew, surnamed "il Cronaca," Vasari tells us, was seized with so great a frenzy for Savonarola's teaching, that he could talk of nothing else, and the young Michelangelo treasured the Frate's

¹ "Prediche sopra Amos e Zaccaria," vol. xxviii, p. 61 *supra*, Ezekiel, 1896.

SIMONE FILIPEPI

memory and read his sermons to his dying day. And just as the Frate's strong faith in the realities of the unseen kindled the interest of the Platonists of Lorenzo's Academy, so the prophetic note in his teaching appealed in an especial manner to the mystic side of Botticelli's nature, while he could not fail to be touched by the sincerity of the man and his deep human sympathy. Whether his altar-piece of the *Coronation* first brought him into connection with Savonarola, or whether he was acquainted with him during the Friar's early residence in San Marco, it is certain that Sandro soon became an ardent Piagnone. This we learn from a curious chronicle or record of these memorable days, which was kept by the painter's own brother, Simone Filipepi.

The third son of the old tanner Mariano, Simone, who was only a year older than Sandro, had, as we learn from his father's tax papers, gone to Naples with Paolo Rucellai as a boy. After being without employment for some time, he entered the service of another rich Florentine, with whom he remained in Naples, until the close of the year 1493. About that time he returned to Florence, and after the death of his father, lived in the old home of the Via Nuova with Sandro. A man of considerable culture, Simone shared his brother's love of Dante, and wrote a commentary on a *canzone* in the "Vita Nuova," "*Tre donne intorno al cor mi son venute*," which he dedicated to Benedetto Manetti, and which is preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale, in a parchment manuscript bearing the date 1495, and the words: "This is by Simone di Mariano Filipepi." "*Idiò bono fine faci di lui*" ("God grant him a blessed end".¹) Another work of Simone is the chronicle mentioned above, which is described by Lorenzo Violi, the young notary who wrote down Savonarola's sermons as they were delivered, and who, in his "Giornate," speaks of the book in which Simone recorded the most noteworthy events of those times: "This his book, bound in boards, was a little chronicle of the things which happened in these days, and I have seen and read this book." If the actual book described by Violi is no longer in existence, a Codex containing copious extracts from Simone's "Cronaca" has been lately discovered in the Vatican Library and published by the Friar's most distinguished biographer,

¹ "Scelta di Prediche e Scritti di Fra Girolamo Savonarola con nuovi documenti intorno alla sua vita," P. Villari and "E. Casanova," p. ix.

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Professor Villari, in his latest volume on Savonarola. As a document for the history of Fra Girolamo, it is of great importance, while its graphic descriptions and vivid touches were evidently supplied by men who were eye-witnesses of the memorable scenes which they record. But as Simone tells us himself that he was still in Naples in 1493, it is clear that the earlier incidents in the great revival must have been described by one of his companions, probably his brother Sandro.

The opening sentences breathe the passionate enthusiasm with which these faithful Piagnoni cherished every word of their master and believed that he was a prophet sent from God.

"Fra Girolamo Savonarola of Ferrara began to preach in Florence in the year 1489, as a prophet, and as one sent from God, foretelling the tribulation of Italy, and exhorting every one to repentance. In the lifetime of Lorenzo, he prophesied that these peaceful days would not last long, and that a conqueror should come over the mountains, like Cyrus of old, and overrun Italy. All wise men mocked at him, and so did Lorenzo, calling the Friar a simpleton. But everything that he foretold was accomplished afterwards in the conquests of the French king, and of the Duke Valentino, and many other things, such as the death of Innocent and Lorenzo."¹

The writer goes on to record some of these prophecies and notably the sermon in which the Frate, one April evening in 1492, foretold the coming woes, and threatened the city with terrible things. "*Ecce gladius Domini, super terram cito et velociter.*" That same night, Simone writes in his journal, the cupola of the Duomo was struck with lightning, and three days afterwards Lorenzo the Magnificent died at Careggi. In subsequent passages he dwells with delight on the wonderful fervour and religious enthusiasm which stirred the whole city, on the tens of thousands who flocked to the Duomo several hours before day-break and waited patiently for the preacher's coming, on the vast multitude of men and women who lined the street which led from San Marco to Santa Maria del Fiore, to see him pass. He tells us how the children stood on steps at the back of the Duomo, "as many as

¹ "Villari e Casanova," *op. cit.*, p. 453. This and the following passages from Simone's "Cronaca" are translated into English and quoted here, by the kind permission of Professor Villari, and his publisher, Signor Sansoni of Florence.

• INFLUENCE OF THE FRIAR

three thousand," for an hour or two before the sermon, and sang lauds and psalms in devout chorus, and when the Padre mounted the pulpit, they all began the "Ave Maria Stella," and "it was as it were a fore-taste of heaven."

Luca Landucci, the honest chemist who had his *spezeria* at the Canto dei Tornaquinci, close to the Tornabuoni houses and Cronaca's newly-built Strozzi palace, confirms Simone's impressions in almost the same words. "There were a great number of children at the services in the Duomo, on raised steps opposite the pulpit and behind the women, and they all sang sweet hymns before the sermon, so much so, that the sweetness of their strains made every one weep, and most of all the wisest and sanest among us, who said with one accord, 'This is God's doing.' And this went on every morning of Lent, before the Friar arrived. And the marvellous thing was that it was impossible to keep children in bed these mornings, and they all hurried to church before their mothers."¹

The Friar, Simone tells us, was quiet and meek as a lamb in ordinary life, and full of kindness and charity, but in the pulpit he seemed to grow in stature and became another St. Paul, speaking boldly without fear of kings or any worldly respect, in the manner of the old prophets and apostles. With tender affection, Sandro's brother recalls the happy summer evenings when they walked with the friars and novices in the quiet gardens of San Marco, and the holy Prior made them sit down with their Bibles in their hands, while he questioned some novice on certain subjects or expounded some fine passage of Holy Writ. Often as many as fifty or sixty laymen would be present at these open-air meetings, and when it was too wet for the garden, they sat in the strangers' hall, and "so great was the Friar's devotion and simplicity that for an hour or two one seemed to be in Paradise, and they were blessed indeed who could be present at these gatherings."²

The different incidents in the great revival are all described, the marvellous effect produced by the Friar's referring to the beautiful order and blessed peace which reigned throughout the city, the procession of white-robed children who walked through the streets at Carnival time, singing "*Viva Cristo e la Vergine Maria, nostra regina!*" and rebuking

¹ Landucci, "Diario," p. 126.

² "Villari e Casanova," *op. cit.*, p. 479.

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gamblers and revellers with so much spirit and courage, that no one could resist them. "And these children of the Frate," says good Luca Landucci, "were held in such reverence, that people kept from vice and dishonesty, and no one, whether young or old, would ever speak of such things. God be praised that I, too, lived in that blessed time. . . . And then in Santa Maria del Fiore, they collected the alms, from the men on one side and the women on the other, with so much devotion and such deep emotion, that the like was never known. Many hundreds of gold florins were put into the plates, and some gave silver spoons, and others their handkerchiefs and veils, without grudging, for every one wished to offer something to Christ and his mother. I have written these things which are true and which I saw with my own eyes, and I felt this same sweetness, and some of my children were among these blessed bands."¹

In those days of general enthusiasm more than three hundred youths of the noblest houses in the city joined the Dominican order. Six Strozzi brothers all took the vows at one time, and elder personages caught the prevailing enthusiasm and entered the convent. One of them was Sandro's old patron, Canon Giorgio Vespucci, who became a friar of San Marco in 1497, and was chiefly instrumental with Savonarola in saving the Medici library from dispersion and securing this priceless collection of manuscripts and books for the use of the convent and city.²

In all of these stirring scenes Sandro took his part. "He became a partisan of the sect of Fra Girolamo," says Vasari in his contemptuous way, "and for this cause abandoned painting. And since he had not money enough to live upon, his affairs soon fell into the greatest disorder. Being obstinately attached to this party he became what was known as a Piagnone ('sniveller') and gave up painting. Thus he was reduced to such poverty in his old age that he would have died of hunger, if it had not been for the alms of Lorenzo dei Medici, and other friends and men of substance, who admired his genius."

There is, as usual, a germ of truth in Vasari's language. Sandro did not give up his art, and he was never reduced to the point of starvation. Neither did he follow the example of some of his brother-

¹ Landucci, pp. 124, 125.

² Brockhaus, H. "Forschungen über Florentinischer Kunstwerke," p. 96.

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artists, and throw his pagan work and studies from the nude on the Bonfire of Vanities. But instead of painting Greek myths and pagan goddesses, he devoted himself almost exclusively to religious subjects. Having, as Vasari scornfully remarks, caught the prevailing frenzy, he threw himself into the Frate's cause with all the energy of his nature. He illustrated Savonarola's sermons, painted banners for his processions, and, according to Vasari, designed a large engraving, entitled the *Triumph of Fra Girolamo*. These manifold occupations may have led him to neglect painting in a measure; but the fact that one of his finest works bears the date of 1500, shows that, even in these late years, his brain had not lost its power, nor his hand its cunning.

There are other pictures which belong to the last decade of the century, and which bear the stamp of Sandro's invention and the marks of Savonarola's influence, if they were only partly his work. Foremost among these is the unfinished picture which came to the Uffizi from the Palazzo Vecchio early in the last century, and was brought out of the magazines of the Gallery in 1881. This is probably the *Adoration of the Magi* "by Sandro's hand," which the Anonimo Gaddiano describes as being "on the staircase which leads to the door of the Catena in the Palace of the Signoria." Botticelli's invention is clearly seen in the composition, which bears a strong resemblance to Leonardo's unfinished *Adoration*. Unfortunately the whole of the panel has been coarsely repainted in oils by some inferior artist of the sixteenth century, and it is difficult to say how far Sandro had proceeded with the work. The scene is laid in a wide mountainous landscape, and the Holy Family are seated in a rocky cave, under precipitous cliffs, which recall the background of *Pallas and the Centaur*. In the foreground are eight kneeling figures, who may be intended to represent the chief magistrates of Florence—the *Otto* of the Signoria—since, unlike the Three Kings, they bring no offerings in their hands, and bear no badge which shows their royal origin. Through the clefts in the rocks a vast concourse of people of all ranks and classes are seen streaming in to take part in the same great act of worship. Young and old, men and women, are moved by the same feverish excitement, the same passionate and tumultuous emotion. Some clasp both hands together in earnest supplication, others point with outstretched arms to the Child-Christ on his mother's knee.

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One leader on horseback lifts his right arm with a commanding gesture, summoning his men to advance; another shades his eyes with his hand from the blaze of light which the bright rays of the star from the East sheds over the Holy Child.

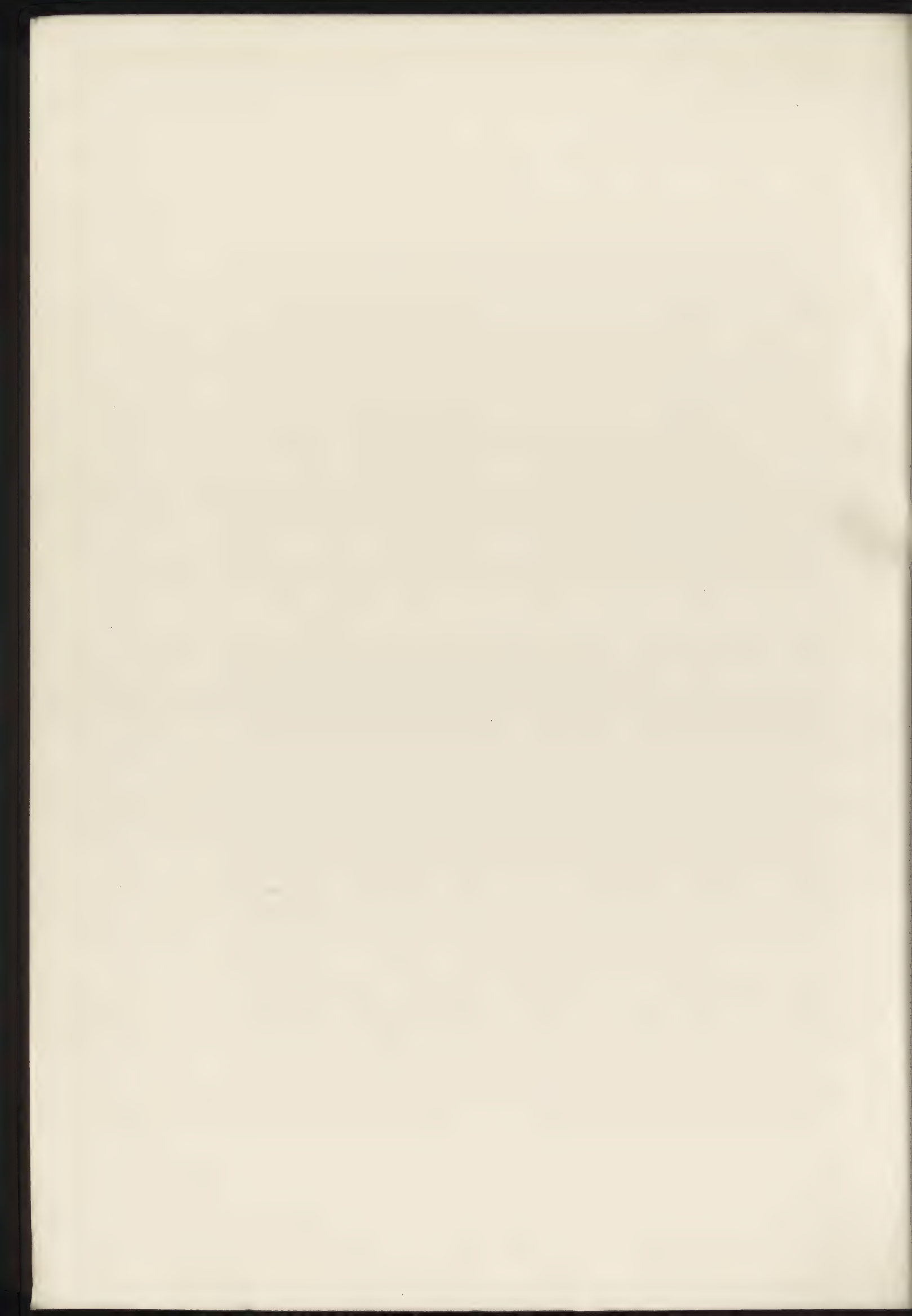
Many portraits of contemporary personages have been recognized among the foremost figures. On the right is Girolamo Benivieni, who became so zealous a Piagnone, and lies buried by the side of his friends, Pico and Poliziano, in San Marco. Behind him stands a tall figure in a flowing robe and long white beard, resting his chin meditatively on his hand, who bears a marked likeness to Leonardo. According to Vasari,¹ the great master was one of the architects summoned by Savonarola early in 1495 to draw up plans for the new hall of the Great Council in the Palazzo, and if he was in Florence at the time, Sandro may well have introduced his old friend's portrait into his picture. On the left, behind St. Joseph, a Dominican friar in long white mantle, probably intended for Savonarola himself, points with ardent devotion to the new-born King, and, turning to a gray-haired figure, in whom some writers recognize Lorenzo dei Medici at his side, adjures him to own the supremacy of Christ. This *Adoration*, which differs in so many respects from Sandro's earlier versions of the subject, was evidently intended to commemorate the crowning triumph of the Frate's revival, when, in 1494, after the expulsion of Piero dei Medici and the departure of the French monarch and his army, a popular form of government was drawn up, and Christ was proclaimed King in Florence. After the execution of Savonarola and his companions, Sandro naturally abandoned his picture, which remained unfinished until the next century, when it was completed by another hand. Such at least is the interpretation of this curious and interesting picture, which was originally suggested by Signor Milanesi and Mr. Heath Wilson, and has been accepted by Dr. Ulmann, Signor Venturi, M. Eugène Müntz, Signor Supino, and other well-known writers. Mr. Horne, however, and some of the latest school of critics, are sceptical on this point, and detect reminiscences of the Pollaiuoli in the work, which, in their opinion, show that it belongs to a much earlier period, and was probably begun about 1480. The present condition of the picture makes it impossible

¹ "Vite," ed. Milanesi, vol. iv, p. 41.



Hans Jaeger

PIETÀ
Almich



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to speak with any certainty on the subject; but the vehement agitation, exaggerated gestures of the actors, as well as the strong emotional feeling which pervades the composition, seem to us to be far more in the manner of Botticelli's later period.

Another picture which bears the same traces of violent movement and tumultuous emotion is the *Pietà* of the Munich Gallery (No. 1010). This was probably the altar-piece seen by Vasari in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Florence, and has been recognized as genuine by Morelli and the leading German critics. There can be no doubt that Sandro designed this striking group with the anguish-stricken Mother falling back into the arms of St. John, while the prostrate Magdalen and the wailing Maries bend in agonizing grief over the dead Christ. The whole conception is, as it were, a living embodiment of Savonarola's most eloquent and pathetic Holy Week sermons, when the preacher's own voice was choked with sobs; and Lorenzo Violi, who wrote down the Friar's discourses as they were delivered, broke off in the middle of a sentence and adds, "Here I could write no more, for I was overcome with tears." It was a time of highly-strung feelings and great religious exaltation, and these emotions are plainly reflected in this *Pietà*, which probably issued from Sandro's *bottega* in 1494 or 1495. But in the awkward drawing of several of the figures and the modelling of the corpse, as well as in the style of the colouring, we see traces of an inferior hand, which, in Mr. Berenson's opinion, is that of Raffaellino del Garbo, one of the master's ablest and most successful assistants.

The influence of Savonarola's teaching is apparent in many other works of this period, more especially in the *tondi* of the *Virgin and Child*, surrounded with boy-angels or accompanied by the little St. John, which he and his followers repeated in so many different forms. These sorrowful Madonnas, burdened with a mysterious sense of coming woe, these fair children, whose faces reflect the mournful foreboding of Mary's countenance, must have been inspired by the eloquent language in which the Frate describes the Mother of many sorrows. The wonderful success which the Madonnas of Sandro's *bottega* obtained, the amazing demand which sprang up on all sides for these *tondi*, was no doubt partly due to the new religious fervour which animated all classes in Florence during the brief period of Savonarola's revival. Every

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devout Piagnone, each pious soul who strove to follow the Frate's rule of holy living, saw in the tender melancholy of Sandro's Madonnas the fulfilment of a cherished ideal. If the master himself was too much absorbed in mystical dreams and too deeply interested in watching the development of public events to paint with his old industry, the scholars and assistants of his *bottega* made good use of their opportunity.



[Photograph - Houghton.]

MADONNA FROM THE ANNUNCIATION
(A SCHOOL WORK)

Countless were the replicas, endless the imitations of original works by the master, which issued from Sandro's workshop in these days and bore his name throughout the years to come.

"Sandro drew exceedingly well," writes Vasari, "so much so that all artists were anxious to obtain his drawings." These drawings supplied his followers with motives for a hundred different paintings. So great was the demand for his Madonnas that his pupils often had recourse to old designs which he had made in the early years when he worked with Fra Filippo

or the Pollaiuoli, and turned them to good account. One artist we know utilized a similar cartoon for the graceful *Madonna and Child with the little Baptist* in the Louvre; another reproduced the *Chigi Madonna* in a painting now at Chantilly, leaving out the symbolic offering of wheat and grapes and substituting a rose and basket of flowers in their stead. The very men who had repeated Botticelli's Greek myths and classical *fantasie*, ten years before, now gave themselves up to the manufacture of Madonnas and Angels. Jacopo del



From a carbon-print by Braun, Clement and Co., Dornach.

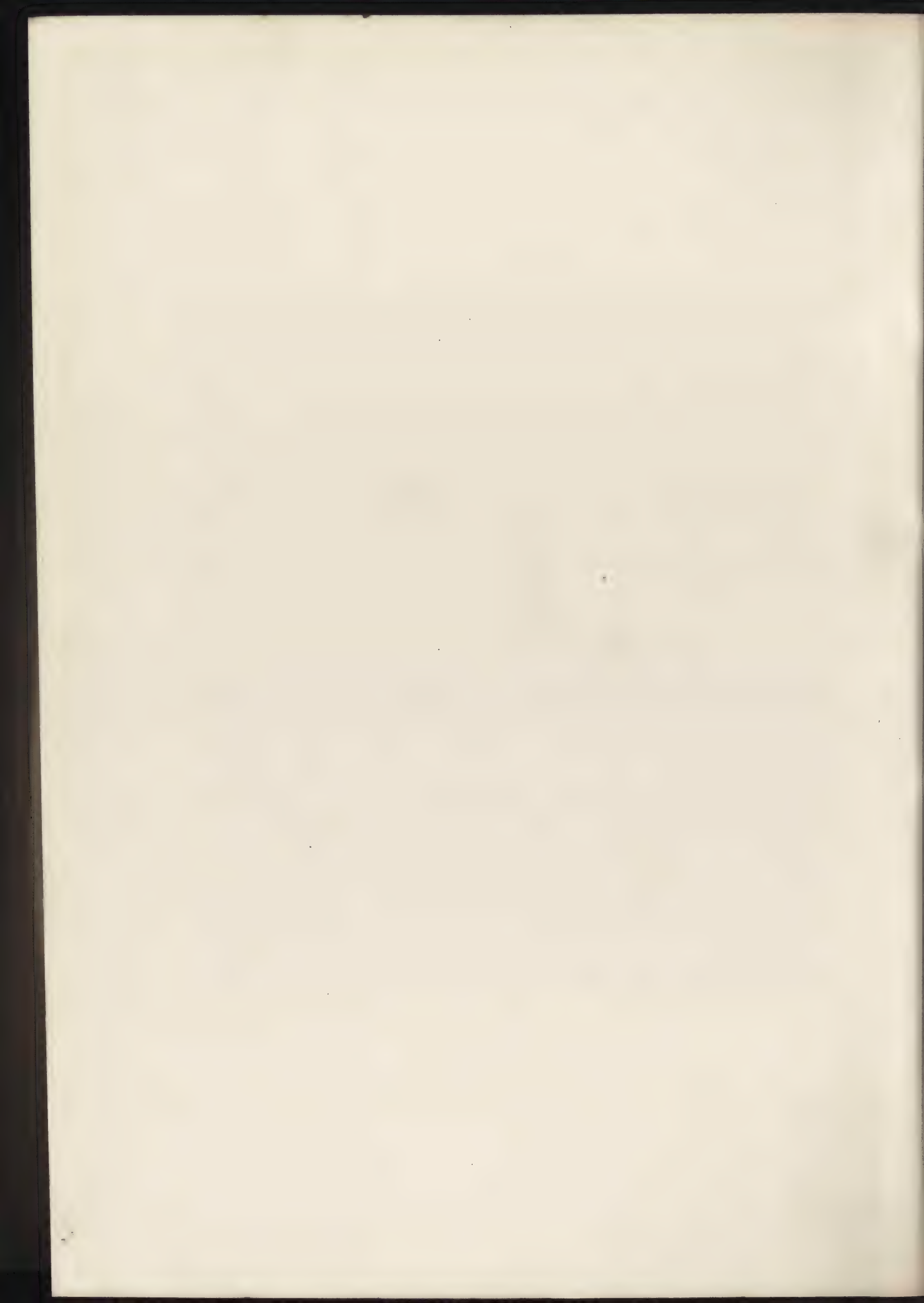
MADONNA, WITH ANGELS BEARING TAPERS.
Berlin.





Houghton.

THE ANNUNCIATION.
Uffizi, Florence.



SCHOOL WORKS

Sellajo's hand has been recognized in the charming *tondo* of the Liechtenstein collection, with the seven angels bearing flowering lilies; and Biagio Tucci probably painted the Raczyński Madonna, with the eight angels wreathed with roses and bearing lighted tapers and vases of red and white roses in their hands, which is now at Berlin. Other artists of inferior powers, whose names have not survived, produced the well-known *tondo* of the National Gallery, with its wild roses in the background, which bears Giuliano di Sangallo's name on the panel, the *Madonna of the Roses* in the Pitti, a graceful but feeble imitation of the Ambrosiana picture, the *Virgin adoring the Child*, with the flowering rosebush, in Lord Wemyss' collection; the *tondi* at Vienna and Turin, and in the Borghese Gallery, and the so-called *Madonna del Passeggio*, with its exaggerated expression of utter weariness and exhaustion. All of these more or less feeble productions retain certain peculiarities of type, as well as a certain tenderness of feeling, which betrays their affinity with Botticelli's art, and afford a fresh proof of the singular hold which his conceptions had gained upon the public mind. In most of them the flowers which he loved so well are reproduced, especially the roses, which he brings into his classical and sacred subjects. Often the very slightest of his motives, a spray of olive or a Madonna lily, the lighted candles borne by the Virtues, who dance round the chariot of Beatrice in the meadows of Paradise, or the roses which flutter round the angel-choirs of heaven, are employed by his imitators to adorn their pictures and hide the poverty of their own invention.

It is no easy task to recognize the different hands which executed these innumerable school-works, but of later years some progress has been made with these attempts, and Mr. Berenson has assigned a whole group, including the fine *Tobias and the Archangels* at Turin, several Madonnas and the charming series of the *Story of Esther*, formerly in Casa Torrigiani at Florence, to the clever assistant whom he calls Amico di Sandro, for the lack of a better name.¹ Then Hans Machowsky and Mrs. Berenson (Mary Logan) have made a careful study of the works in which Jacopo del Sellajo's hand is plainly seen, while Mr. Berenson has discovered the hand of Ghirlandajo's old pupil Bartolommeo di Giovanni, the painter of Nastagio degli Onesti's Banquet,

¹ "The Study and Criticism of Italian Art," pp. 46-69.

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in many of the woodcuts of the "Sacre Rappresentazioni," which were published in Florence during the last decade of the fifteenth century.¹ Several of these small books are directly connected with Savonarola, and represent the Friar preaching his great sermons to eager crowds in Santa Maria del Fiore, or visiting a convent and addressing the nuns, or else writing in his cell. These designs for woodcuts, executed by Piagnone artists, probably prompted Vasari to assert that after his return from Rome, Botticelli wasted his time in designing unsuccessful engravings, the best of which was the *Triumph of the Faith* of Girolamo Savonarola di Ferrara. It is true that Savonarola's treatise, the "Triumph of Faith," appeared with a frontispiece by some contemporary artist, who may have been a scholar of Botticelli; but the book itself appeared six years after Sandro's death, and is certainly not by his hand. Perhaps, as Mr. Heath Wilson suggests, the historian was confusing the subject of the master's unfinished painting of the *Adoration of Christ* as King in Florence with these engravings executed by his followers.

¹ "Burlington Magazine," March, 1903, p. 18.



Alinari.

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE.
S. Ansano, Fiesole. By Jacopo del Sellaio.







From a carbon-print by Braun, Clement and Co., Dornach.

SCENE FROM THE LIFE OF ZENOBIUS.
Dresden.

CHAPTER XV

1491—1500

Botticelli's paintings of St. Zenobius.—The *Story of Virginia* and *Death of Lucretia*.—Death of Lorenzo dei Medici.—Sandro's relations with Lorenzo di Pier Francesco.—Simone Filipepi shares his home and devotion to Fra Girolama.—Trial and death of Savonarola.—Persecution of the Piagnoni.—Sandro's *Allegory of Calumny*.—The Academy of Unemployed Artists.—Doffo Spini's conversation with Sandro.—Botticelli's *Nativity* in the National Gallery.

AS long as Lorenzo dei Medici lived, he proved a good friend to Botticelli. On the 5th of January, 1491, the painter was appointed member of a commission which met to judge the designs which had been prepared for the façade of the Duomo. Ghirlandajo, Alessio Baldovinetti, Filippino Lippi, Perugino, Lorenzo di Credi, and Cronaca were among the members of the commission, and Lorenzo himself presided over this important meeting. Antonio Pollaiuolo and Giuliano da Maiano, and several other eminent architects, sent in models for competition, but Lorenzo and his advisers ultimately agreed to defer their decision for the present, saying that the question was too important to be decided hastily.¹ Four months later, on the 18th of May, Botticelli was chosen, together with Domenico Ghirlandajo, his brother and assistant David, and the miniaturists Gherardo and Monte di Giovanni, to execute a series of mosaics for the decoration of the chapel of St. Zenobius, in the Duomo. The work was never carried out, but three panels on the life and miracles of the Saint, by the hand of Sandro, which are still in existence, may have been originally designed in preparation for the task, and afterwards adapted for use as *Cassoni*. Two of these, in which the calling, baptism and consecration of the good Bishop, and his first miracles are represented, now belong to the collection of Mr. Ludwig Mond. A third, formerly in the Metzger and Quandt collections, is now in the Dresden Gallery. Here the Saint

¹ Vasari, "Vite," ed. Milanesi, vol. iv, p. 301

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resuscitates a child, who has been run over by the wheels of a cart, and restores him to his mother's embraces, while, in another compartment, he is represented lying on his death-bed and giving his last blessing to the assembled priests and people. All of these are marked by the same richness and variety of architecture and the same animated action. The consternation aroused in the street by the accident to the boy, and the rapture of the mother who clasps her child once more in her arms are both vividly depicted, but the artistic effect of the whole is marred by the crowds of figures introduced, and the violent gestures and extravagant emotion displayed by the different actors in the drama. Two other interesting works of a similar nature, but of a finer and more restrained style, may be mentioned here, although their finer style and more restrained action seem to point to an earlier date of execution. One, the *Story of Virginia*, is in the Morelli Gallery at Bergamo, the other, the *Death of Lucretia*, has recently passed from the Ashburnham Collection into that of Mrs. T. L. Gardner at Boston in the United States. These long narrow panels were evidently intended for the decoration of wedding chests or other furniture, and may, as Morelli suggests, belong to the series which Sandro painted for the house of his old patrons, the Vespucci. "In the Via dei Servi," writes Vasari, "on the walls of a room in the house of Giovanni Vespucci, he painted many pictures framed in richly-carved panelling of walnut wood, full of beautiful and highly animated figures." Both pictures are remarkable for the imposing character of the classical architecture which is introduced in the background, and for the dramatic power with which the different incidents in these tragic tales are represented. The *Story of Virginia* is decidedly the finer of the two and contains, as Morelli has said, "about fifty figures as spirited in conception as they are careful in execution, each one indispensable to the harmony of the whole." As Vasari remarks, Sandro certainly never grudged his pains, and his smallest pictures are always crowded with figures. "*Fu copioso di figure nelle storie.*" In this case, however, the composition is better than usual, and the groups are less confused and the action less exaggerated. "I could," writes Morelli, "scarcely name another work in which Botticelli's great artistic qualities, as well as his defects, are so strikingly apparent as in his masterly representation of this tragic



From a carbon-print by Braun, Clement and Co., Dornach.

SCENE FROM THE LIFE OF S. ZENOBIUS.
Dresden.





From carbon-print by Messrs. Braun, Clement and Co., Dornach.

SCENE FROM THE LIFE OF S. ZENOBIUS.

Dresden.

DEATH OF LORENZO

scene."¹ The background of the picture is occupied by a stately basilica adorned with bas-reliefs and pillars, where the Roman aedile administers justice, seated on a raised tribunal, while in the foreground the actual scene of Virginia's abduction takes place, and a group of armed riders, chariots and prancing horses are introduced. This panel is, fortunately, in excellent preservation and retains much of its original richness and harmony of colour.

The different schemes for the completion and adorning of the Duomo which, as we have seen, were set on foot in 1491, were interrupted by the premature death of Sandro's great patron, Lorenzo il Magnifico. All through the summer and autumn of that year he suffered acutely from gout, and even the waters of Morbo and the pure air of the Volterra hills failed to relieve his pains. The cold weather of the early spring increased his sufferings, and when on the 10th of March, 1492, the elevation of his son Giovanni to the Cardinalate was proclaimed, Lorenzo was unable to be present at the solemn Mass celebrated in honour of the occasion in the Duomo, and could only be carried round on a litter, to greet the brilliant company assembled at the banquet in the Medici Palace. Ten days later he was taken to his favourite villa at Careggi, and there, with Pico and Poliziano to soothe his dying moments, and Savonarola to give him the last blessing, the great man died on Sunday, 8th April, at the age of forty-three. His body was borne to Florence, and rested for two days in state in San Marco until, on Tuesday the 10th of April, he was buried in the parish church of San Lorenzo, by the side of his father and grandfather.

"Well may each one of us ask, 'what is this poor human life of ours?'" moralizes Luca Landucci, in true Piagnone fashion, as he records these events. "This man was to all appearance the most glorious man living, and he had the greatest fame and the richest and proudest position in the world. Everyone said that he governed Italy, and he was indeed a wise man, and all that he did prospered. And he had just succeeded in accomplishing what no other citizen had done for very long, he had seen his son raised to the rank of Cardinal. And yet with all this glory, when he reached this point he could go no further. O man, man, what reason hast thou for boastfulness? May God, who

¹ "Italian Painters," trans. by C. J. Ffoulkes," vol. ii, p. 85.

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alone is great, pardon this man's sins, as I pray that he may pardon mine!"¹

In Lorenzo dei Medici Florence lost her wisest and most successful ruler, and her artists were deprived of their most enlightened patron. The brilliant circle of which he had been the centre soon melted away. Pico della Mirandola and Angelo Poliziano both died two years after their illustrious friend, and Michelangelo left Florence. Botticelli never appears to have had any dealings with the Magnifico's worthless son, Piero, who soon disgusted his father's best friends, but he still clung to his old patron, Lorenzo di Pier Francesco. Fortunately for Sandro and his friends, this cousin of Lorenzo, as well as his younger brother Giovanni, both joined the popular party, and were allowed to remain in Florence and even employed on affairs of State when their kinsman, Piero, and his family were expelled from the city. It was probably about this time that Sandro began his series of drawings on the "Divina Commedia" for this patron, and when, on the 14th of July, 1496, young Michelangelo wrote to Lorenzo di Pier Francesco, who had sent him with introductions to his friends in Rome, he addressed his letter to "Sandro del Botticello the painter," in a cover bearing the Piagnone motto, "Christus!" But although Sandro had embraced the doctrines of the Friar, and shared the general enthusiasm of his revival, he must have seen with sorrow the dispersion of the magnificent collections which Lorenzo and his family had acquired with so much pains, the confiscation of the antique marbles and the priceless medals and vases and the "many beautiful objects" which were sold by public auction in front of Or San Michele.² The revulsion of fickle popular feeling vented itself in these angry reprisals, and it was only the strenuous exertions of Savonarola, supported by Botticelli's learned friend, Giorgio Vespucci, that saved the famous Laurentian Library. Still sadder for the painter of the Tornabuoni frescoes was the summer day when young Lorenzo, the mirror of fashion and popular leader of the Florentine youth, was condemned to death with his four illustrious fellow-citizens. In vain Guid' Antonio Vespucci begged for delay, and Savonarola himself recommended the youth to mercy. Francesco Valori was inexorable, and the five partizans of the Medici were put to

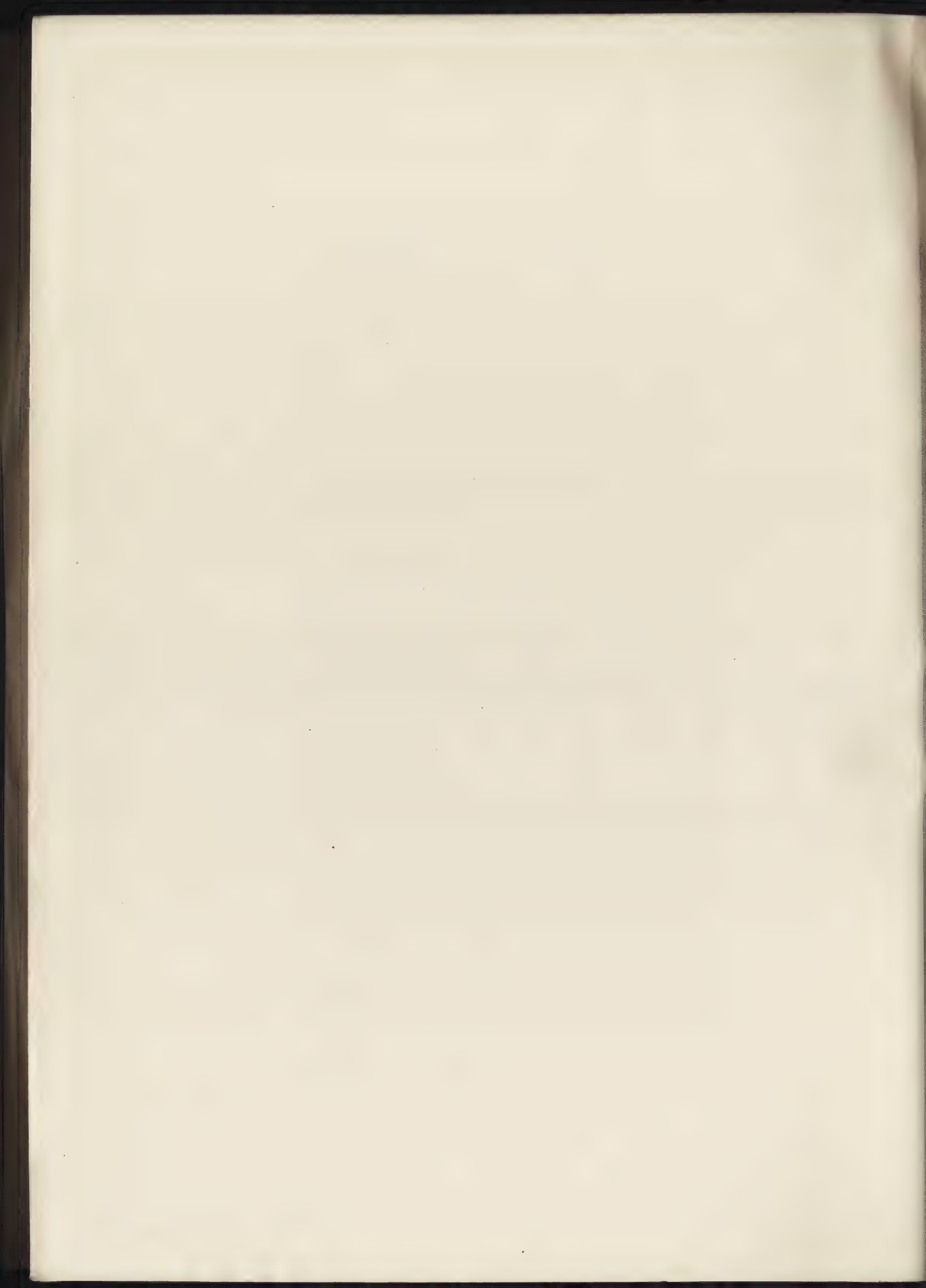
¹ "Diario," p. 65.

² L. Landucci, "Diario."



THE STORY OF VIRGINIA.
Virginia.

M. Rossi.



EXECUTION OF SAVONAROLA

death amid the lamentations of the spectators. Within the next few months, Savonarola died at the stake, and the great movement closed in tears and bloodshed. In 1498, the year of Savonarola's execution, we learn from an income-tax paper that Sandro was still living in his old home in the Via Nuova.¹ Both his father and elder brother Giovanni were dead, and the house was now the property of his nephews, Benincasa and Lorenzi Filipepi. But Simone Filipepi, we know, still lived under the same roof and shared a country house (Casa di Signore) in the parish of San Sepolcro, with him. The brothers, it appears, bought this house outside the gate of San Frediano, together with a vineyard and some fields, soon after their father's death, in April, 1494, for the sum of 156 florins and a yearly quit-rent of four soldi and a pair of capons, which they paid to the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova. Thus it is clear that we need not believe Vasari's description of the extreme state of penury to which the painter found himself reduced by his neglect of work and *frenesia* for the Frate's cause. But Sandro must have suffered keenly during the terrible events of 1498, which his brother records with all the vividness of an eye-witness who was profoundly interested in the issue of the struggle.

Step by step he follows his sainted leader through the days of his waning popularity, and of the increasing animosity of his foes. He describes the successive scenes of the ordeal by fire, the midnight attack on the convent, the mock trial and falsified depositions, the torture and dungeon, and the final execution on the Piazza, which Simone himself witnessed. "I was present at this spectacle and say what I saw, and know these things to be true." He records how on the scaffold Bishop Pagagnotti pronounced the words: "I separate you from the Church militant and triumphant"; and how he heard the Frate reply: "Monsignore, you are mistaken. You can separate me from the Church militant but not from the Church triumphant. That remains with God (*Sta a Dio*)."

And he bears unfaltering witness to the Friar's holiness and purity of life. "His worst enemies could not say a word against his conduct. He read and prayed and wrote, and said his office, and never wasted a moment, and gave audience to all who wished to see him. No one ever left him unconsolated, although it were his worst enemy, and he was

¹ Gaye, "Carteggio," vol. i, p. 343.

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always joyous and cheerful. . . . When in prison, bound hand and foot in the vilest dungeon, he bore his sufferings without a murmur—this his jailer told me—but only said to him: ‘Live honestly and God will bring you to his paradise, where we shall be together again.’ And he wrote out a brief rule of life with his disabled hand, and gave the man some advice for his little daughter, who sometimes came to see him.”¹ And he adds that Ser Ceccone, the notary who drew up the process and wrote down the supposed depositions of the Frate, died in the same year, crying out in the anguish of his remorse: “I have been another Judas, and have betrayed innocent blood.”

Very gloomy is the picture which contemporaries paint of the days of persecution which followed, when many of the friars of San Marco were cast into prison and his devoted followers were doomed to ruin and death. Then the vilest calumnies were heaped upon the Frate and his friends, and no one could speak his name without peril to his life. All fear of God and reverence for holy things seemed to have died out, blasphemy and sacrilege went unpunished. Hell itself seemed to open, and all its devils were let loose. In those terrible days Simone Filipepi fled for safety to Bologna, where many of the Piagnoni had already taken shelter, but Sandro remained in Florence. His old connection with the Medici and the friendship of Lorenzo di Pier Francesco stood him in good stead; but he saw the crime and misery about him, and shared in the deep dejection of the faithful Piagnoni who had believed in the prophet’s word and looked for the coming of the New Jerusalem that was to be set up on earth.

“And I was stupefied and amazed,” writes Luca the chemist. “And grief filled my heart at the sight of this fair edifice which had suddenly crumbled into dust. . . . Florence looked to see the foundation of a New Jerusalem from which laws would go forth to the whole world, and the coming of a new age, when all men would see the splendour and example of good living and witness the reform of the Church, the conversion of the infidels and the consolation of the good. And now, alas! we saw the contrary of all these things. . . . *In voluntate tua Domine omnia sunt posita.*”²

Then it was that in the bitterness of his soul at the failure of these

¹ “Villari e Casanova,” *op. cit.*, p. 501.

² “Diario,” p. 173.

CALUMNY

high hopes, Sandro painted his *Allegory of Calumny*, that wonderful little picture which breathes so deep a sense of sadness and passionate a faith in the final triumph of Truth. The subject was taken from the "Dialogues" of the Greek poet Lucian, with which, as we have already seen, Botticelli was intimately acquainted, probably through Guarino's translation, and which had become familiar to Florentine artists from its introduction into Alberti's "Treatise on Painting," that book which supplied Sandro with so many of his favourite motives. The scene is laid in a noble pillared hall, adorned with antique statues and bas-reliefs of classical



Photograph—Houghton.]

CALUMNY
(UFFIZI)

subjects in chiaroscuro heightened with gold. Old Greek myths and Roman stories are mingled with Hebrew legends. The gods of Hellas and the Caesars of Imperial Rome appear side by side with the saints and apostles of the Christian Church, in the true spirit of Florentine humanists. Pallas bearing the Gorgon's head forms a companion piece to Judith with the head of Holofernes, and St. George and the Dragon are represented on the same frieze as Apollo and Daphne and a family of Centaurs at play with a young lion. Venus and her Amorini, Jupiter and Antiope, Trajan and the Widow, the Death of Lucretia, are introduced side by side with statues of apostles and prophets, and a single

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figure of St. George, which recalls Donatello's statue in the niche of Or San Michele and Andrea del Castagno's portrait of Pippo Spano.

Under this stately Renaissance portico a fearful crime is being perpetrated in the name of Justice. The unjust judge, clad in a green robe and bearing the crown and sceptre which denotes his kingly office, as described by Lucian, is seated on his throne between Ignorance and Suspicion, two repulsive-looking women, who with impatient gestures and eager haste pour their malicious accusations into his long ears.



Photograph—Houghton.]

GROUP OF CALUMNY AND INNOCENCE, FROM CALUMNY
(UFFIZI)

Before him Envy, a pale and squalid figure, clad in shaggy skins, having, in Alberti's words, the air of a person exhausted by long conflict, reaches out one skinny hand to arrest the judge's attention and leads forward Calumny with the other. This central figure of the allegory appears, according to Alberti's directions, in the form of a fair and richly-clad woman, "*una donnetta bella*," with a cunning and malicious face. In one hand she bears a flaming torch, while with the other she drags the prostrate boy Innocence by the hair along the floor, heedless of his prayers for mercy. Two attendants, Fraud and Treachery, wait upon her footsteps, and with hurried, agitated movements and gestures

CALUMNY

wreath their mistress's head with roses. A few steps from this group, at the feet of Innocence, stands Remorse, an old hag, with bent figure and decrepit limbs, wearing a black mantle over her ragged clothes and leaning on a crutch as she looks back over her shoulder at the nude form of Truth who, fair as Venus Anadyomene of old, lifts her hand to heaven in the calm certainty that there her mute appeal will be heard. Through the open arches of the pillared loggia behind we look out on a wide waste of green waters and far horizons, which leave an indefinite sense of dreariness on the mind, the expression of the painter's conviction that Truth and Justice were nowhere to be found upon earth.

This allegory, in which the classical ideals of the master's early manhood are combined with the bitter experiences of later years was Sandro's silent protest against the tragedy of Fra Girolamo's cruel end. When he painted that inspired vision of Truth, with the upturned eyes and the tresses of golden hair streaming over her white limbs, can we doubt that he recalled the burning words with which the Frate closed his great course of sermons on the Psalm *Quam bonus*: "Wine is strong, the king is strong, women are stronger, but Truth is mightier than all, and will prevail."

The story is told with dramatic force and vigour, if, as in most of Sandro's last works, the violent gestures and confusion of the figures mar the general effect, and the rich, harmonious colouring and profusion of gold in the sculptured friezes agrees with the technique of the *Nativity* of 1500, a picture of about the same size. This little *Allegory of Calumny* probably belongs to the same dark days, when no one dared speak the Frate's name and honest men could only declare their secret thoughts in parables. Then, in the silence and solitude of his home, Sandro painted this wonderful little picture and gave it to his dearest and most intimate friend Antonio Segni. Perhaps Antonio was a Piagnone, like himself, and understood the hidden meaning of his painted allegory. We know, at all events, that he was a man of taste and culture, the chosen friend of another great painter Leonardo, who a year or two later gave him his own noble drawing of *Neptune and the Sea-gods riding the Waves*. He treasured Botticelli's *Calumny* among his choicest possessions, and his son, Fabio Segni, in whose house

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Vasari saw the little painting, "a thing as beautiful as it well can be," wrote the following Latin epigram upon the frame:

Judicio quemquam ne falso laedere tentent
Terrarum reges, parva tabella monet.
Huic similem Aegypti regi donavit Apelles;
Rex fuit et dignus munere, munus eo.

"This little panel is a warning to mortal kings not to judge any man falsely. Apelles gave a similar work to the King of Egypt. The King was worthy of the gift and the gift not unworthy of the King."¹

Even in those dark days Sandro's faith in the Friar never wavered. Every line of Simone's chronicle breathes the same profound conviction that this man, whom Florence had rejected and put to death, was a prophet sent from God. The writer notes how in the course of the next few years many of Fra Girolamo's words have come true, and dwells with satisfaction on the violent and miserable end which had already overtaken some of his most bitter enemies, Pope Alexander VI, Caesar Borgia, King Alfonso of Naples, Lodovico Sforza, and many others. And he records the unwilling testimony borne to Savonarola's innocence by his jailors and persecutors, most of all by Doffo Spini, the bold and reckless leader of the riotous Compagnacci who stormed the convent, and who was afterwards present at the Frate's trial.

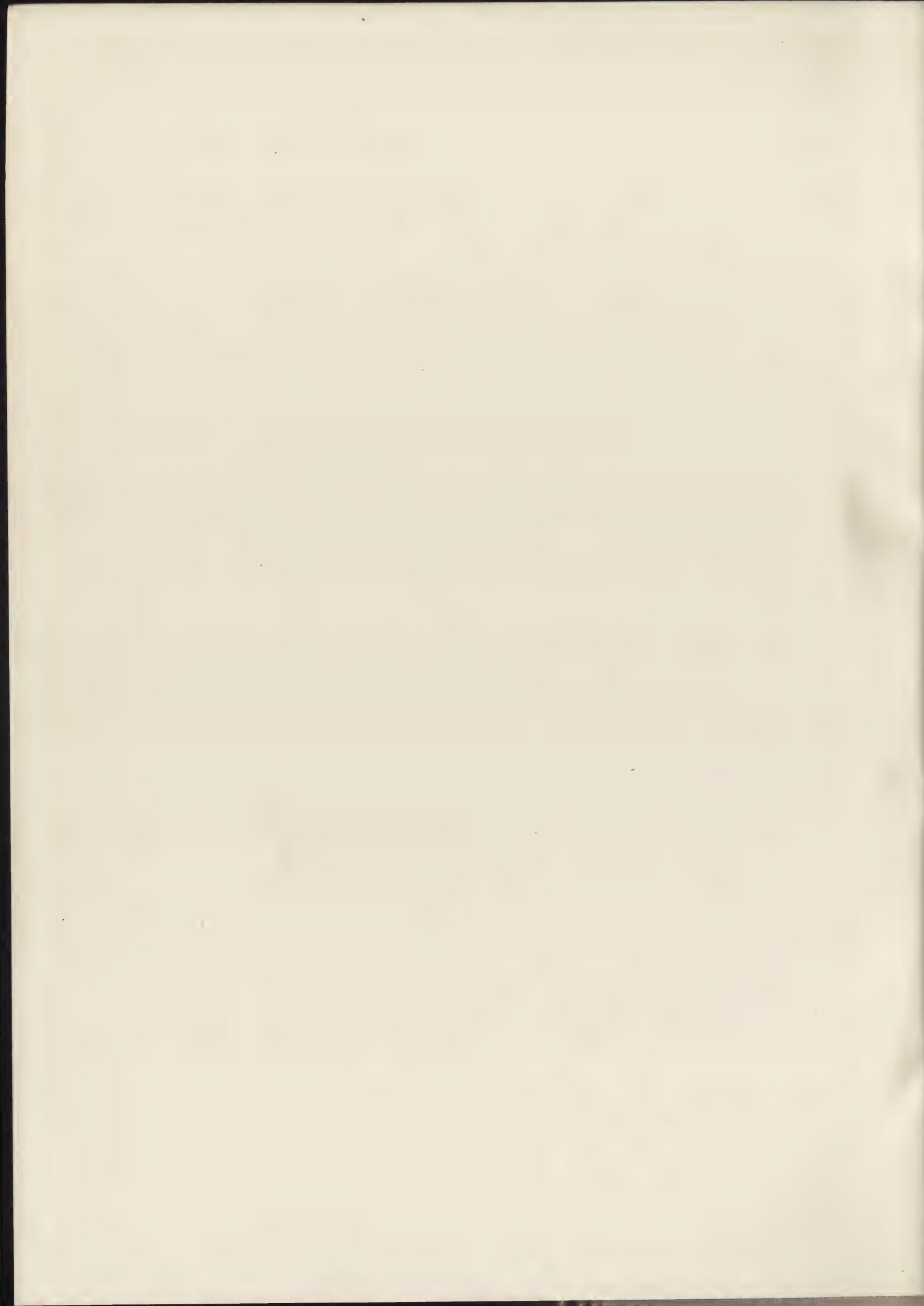
Among other curious records, on the 9th of April, 1503, Simone notes down a conversation which he had that day with Doffo Spini, whom he met in the street as he left his house in the Via Nuova to go to vespers at San Marco. A certain Bartolommeo Carducci, who was walking with Doffo, turned angrily on Simone, reproaching him with all the ruin and trouble which Fra Girolamo and the Piagnoni had brought upon the city. Upon which Doffo Spini took up the subject and said that he never knew Fra Girolamo until he saw him in prison,

¹ Another curious little picture of this period, in which Mr. Berenson and Dr. Steinmann recognize Botticelli's hand, is the so-called *Derehitta* or Outcast in the Pallavicini Palace in Rome. A young woman in a ragged white linen garment is seated on the steps of a stately Renaissance building, weeping bitterly. Her long dark hair falls heavily over her face, her head is buried in her hands, and her other clothes lie strewn on the steps around her. In her loneliness she is the very image of inconsolable despair. This figure bears some resemblance to that of Remorse in the *Allegory of Calumny*, but it is difficult to believe that this work, which is so curiously modern in style and sentiment, could have been painted by a fifteenth century master.



Houghton.

CALUMNY.
Uffizi.



DOFFO SPINI'S CONVERSATION

and during his examinations. "If," he added, "I had heard him before and knew him intimately—as Simone here," he said, turning to me, "I should have been an even more ardent follower of his than Simone; because I saw nothing but good in him until his death; but it was necessary that he should lay down his life, as it was with Christ." "And he said many other things which I may perhaps one day write in this book," continues Simone, "although not without danger; but now my bark is still on the high seas, and I must guide its course wisely, trusting in God to bring me safely to port."¹

In the "Giornate" of that devoted Piagnone, Lorenzo Violi, we find repeated allusions to an "Academy of Unemployed Artists" who, having no work to fill their time in those troubled days, were in the habit of meeting in the shop of Sandro Botticelli. The name of Savonarola was often on the lips of these artists who, having nothing better to do, fought the old battles over again, and attacked or defended the Frate's actions and teaching, according as they were Arrabbiati or Piagnoni. On these occasions, Lorenzo Violi tells us, the painter's brother Simone was often present, and wrote down some of these discussions in his "Cronaca." Amongst others, Simone has recorded the following conversation, which took place on the Feast of All Souls, November 2nd, 1499.

"Alessandro di Mariano Filipepi, my brother, one of the good painters whom we have had in these times in our city, being in my presence, by the fireside at home, about eight o'clock at night, told me how that day, in his shop in Sandro's house, he had reasoned with Doffo Spini on the fate of Fra Girolamo. And indeed Sandro, knowing Doffo to have been one of the chief persons who had been present at his examination, adjured him to tell him the real truth as to what crimes were found in him to deserve so shameful a death. Upon which Doffo replied: "Sandro, must I speak the truth? We never found in him any venial, much less any mortal sin." Then Sandro asked him: "Why then did you put him to so shameful a death?" "It was not I," replied Doffo, "but Benozzo Federighi. And if we had not put this prophet and his companions to death, but had sent them back to San Marco, the people would have sacked our houses and cut us all to

¹ "Villari e Casanova," *op. cit.*, p. 499.

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pieces. The thing had gone so far that we determined that they must die for our own sake. After that many other words passed between them, which I need not repeat."¹ This interesting record throws light on the painting of the Nativity which Sandro completed a few months after the November evening when he extorted that memorable confession of Fra Girolamo's innocence from Doffo Spini. It is clearly one of those works which, like the portraits of Savonarola and the pictures of his execution, were hidden by his devoted followers in the days of persecution, and handed down as treasures by their descendants. Sixty years ago, this *Nativity* was brought from Florence to England by Mr. Young Ottley, and in 1878, it passed from the Fuller-Maitland collection into the National Gallery.

Here the painter's soaring fancy has transformed the story of the birth of Christ into a mystic vision of the triumph of Savonarola and his final reward. The rude wooden roof of the penthouse is set against a rocky cavern, in the heart of a pine forest. The Madonna kneels in adoration before her new-born Child, and St. Joseph crouches on the floor with his head sunk in his folded arms, watching over his charge. On the right a winged angel with an olive-branch in his hand, urges on the shepherds who kneel in lowly worship before the manger throne. On the left another eager seraph, with a branch and scroll in his hand, turns to the kneeling Kings from the East whom we see here, crowned with olive and clad in flowing white robes, and points to the Holy Child whose presence they seek. Three angels, clad in symbolic hues of white, red, and green, with olive crowns on their heads and olive branches in their hands, sing the "Gloria in Excelsis" from an open chant-book, on the pent-house roof. In the blue sky above, twelve more seraphs dance hand in hand, swinging olive-boughs to and fro, and dangling their golden crowns in an ecstasy of joy.

The hour, long foretold by the Cumaean Sibyl on the banks of Lake Avernus, has come at length. There is joy in heaven, and peace and goodwill on earth. The Virgin's face has lost all trace of care and sadness, and the Child laughs for gladness as he looks up in his mother's face. In the foreground crawling devils are seen hurrying away to hide among the rocks, while rejoicing angels fall on the necks

¹ "Villari e Casanova," *op. cit.*, p. 508.



Alinari.

DRAWING, OF THREE ANGELS.
Uffizi, Florence.

THE NATIVITY

of Fra Girolamo and his martyred companions, and welcome them with rapturous embraces. On the scroll in the foremost angel's hand we read the words: "*Hominibus bonae voluntatis*," an allusion to the message of peace and goodwill which the Frate brought to mankind. As a further proof of his unshaken belief in the innocence of the three Saints whom he represents crowned with olive and wearing the Dominican habit, Sandro has written the following words in Greek letters on the upper part of the panel: "This picture I, Alessandro, painted at the



Photograph—Houghton.]

THE HOLY FAMILY
A STUDY FOR THE NATIVITY (UFFIZI)

close of the year 1500, during the troubles of Italy, in the half-time after the time which was prophesied in the eleventh of St. John, and the Second Woe of the Apocalypse, when the devil was loosed upon the earth for three years and a half. Afterwards he shall be put in chains according to the Twelfth, and we shall see him trodden under foot as in this picture."¹ In these mystical terms, borrowed from the Book of Daniel, Sandro proclaims his conviction that Savonarola and his martyred companions were the witnesses slain for the word of their testimony, as told by St. John in the eleventh chapter of the Book of Revelation. And he tells us in no uncertain voice that the hour of vengeance is at hand when the accuser of the brethren will be cast down and bound."

¹ This inscription was first deciphered by Professor Colvin, who published his interpretation of the Greek lines in the "Portfolio" of 1871.

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So the painter would have us know that in these dark and desperate times, his faith in the Friar had never failed, and that he still looked forward to a day when the prophet's word should be fulfilled, and good triumph over evil.

A pen-drawing of a kneeling Madonna, with St. Joseph crouching behind the Child, is still preserved in the Uffizi, and although it differs in some respects from the picture, was evidently a preliminary study for the central group. In the faulty proportions of these figures as well as in the hasty execution of the faces, we see signs of decaying powers and advancing years. But the colour of the picture is rich and glowing, and the dancing Angels are as light and joyous in their movements as any which Sandro drew of old. Above all his imagination is as full of fire and buoyancy, his faith and love are as strong as in the early days of his youth, when he first painted for the Medici.

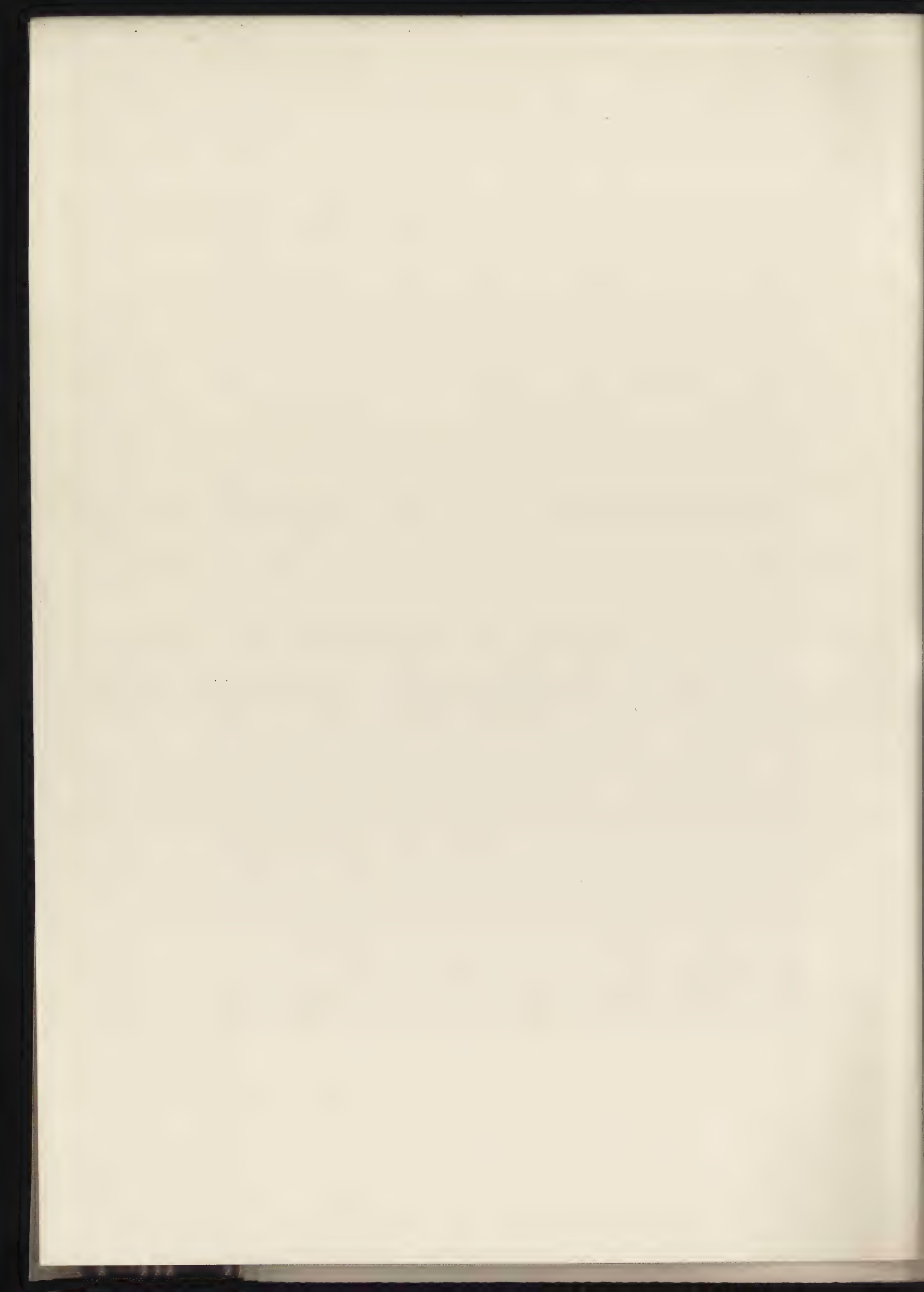
Another drawing, which was evidently a sketch for the three Angels singing the "Gloria in excelsis" on the penthouse roof, is preserved in the Uffizi, and is so delicate and beautiful an example of Sandro's art that no student of his work should fail to see it. Mr. Berenson has lately drawn attention to the exquisite charm of these seraphs, ten of whom are floating through the air with their faces turned toward each other, while a third, resting his hands on their shoulders, wafts them gently forward, and they all sing their hymn of praise together from an open book. This little drawing, which bears a close affinity to the painter's drawings of the *Paradiso*, is the more precious because so few of Botticelli's original sketches have been preserved. Probably those "infinite bands of apprentices" who worked in the *bottega*, and to whom Sandro showed himself so kind and indulgent a master, employed them so constantly for their own pictures that, as Mr. Berenson suggests, "they were worn to tatters by repeated use."¹

¹ "The Drawings of Florentine Painters," vol. i, p. 60. For a full description of Botticelli's own studies, as well as those of his school, we must refer our readers to this valuable work.



Hans Holbein the Younger.

THE NATIVITY.
National Gallery.



CHAPTER XVI

1490—1510

Botticelli's illustrations of Dante's "*Divina Commedia*."—The copper-plates of Landino's edition of "*Dante*."—History of the Dante drawings.—The *Inferno*.—*Purgatorio*.—*Paradiso*.—Introduction of Botticelli's name in the twenty-eighth drawing of *Paradiso*.—Meeting of artists to choose a site for Michelangelo's *David*.—Botticelli's last years and death.—Decline of his popularity in Florence.

THE *Nativity* of 1500 was, as far as we know, the last picture which Botticelli ever painted. But he lived ten years longer, and probably devoted much of his time during this last period of his existence to one of his greatest works, the illustration of the "*Divina Commedia*."

A revived enthusiasm for the study of Dante had been one of the leading features which distinguished the Florentine humanists of Sandro's time. Lorenzo himself made repeated efforts to obtain the restoration of the great poet's ashes from the Podestà of Ravenna, and translated Dante's treatise, "*De Monarchia*," and another of the foremost scholars of the age, Cristoforo Landino, the friend of Alberti and Marsilio Ficino, wrote a commentary on the "*Divina Commedia*," which was solemnly presented to the Signoria on its publication in 1481. From early days, Botticelli shared in this enthusiasm, and was himself an ardent student of Dante. "After his return from Rome," writes Vasari, "being a man of a speculative turn of mind, he wrote a commentary on part of Dante, illustrated the '*Inferno*' and had it printed; and in these occupations he wasted a great deal of time and neglected his own work, which was a cause of infinite disorder in his life."

If Sandro, as Vasari tells us twice over, ever wrote a commentary on Dante, the work has not hitherto come to light, but the drawings with which he illustrated the three divisions of his fellow-citizen's great poem of heaven and earth, have fortunately been preserved. Another of his biographers, the Anonimo Gaddiano, gives us further

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information on the subject; saying that Sandro "illustrated a Dante in *carta pecora* (parchment) for Lorenzo di Pier Francesco dei Medici, which was held to be a marvellous thing." But, although we know the name of the illustrious patron from whom Sandro received this important commission, we have no certain knowledge of the date when the vast work was executed. There can be little doubt that it extended over many years, and made large demands on the painter's time and thoughts, "consuming," as Vasari says, "valuable hours, and leading him to neglect more profitable engagements." Sandro may even have begun the work, as the biographer tells us, soon after his return from Rome, but more probably about 1490, while from the style and workmanship of the "Paradiso," he was evidently engaged upon this portion of the poem during the last years of the century, when he made the pen-and-ink studies for the *Nativity* in the Uffizi.

There is, indeed, a strong probability that he turned his attention to the illustration of the "Divina Commedia" at a still earlier period in his career, and supplied the original sketches for the nineteen copper-plates of the "Inferno," which adorned the edition published at Florence in 1481 by the German printer, Nicolaus Lorenzo, or Niccolö della Magna, as he was called in Italy. These plates, which are executed in the rude manner of early Tuscan engravers, were formerly ascribed to Baccio Baldini, a Florentine goldsmith, whose plates, according to Vasari, were all designed by Botticelli. Dr. Lippmann, however, who made a minute and elaborate analysis of these engravings, which appeared in the same volume containing Landino's commentary, is of opinion that the true name of the artist is still unknown, but that he certainly worked from Sandro's drawings. The close connection between these copper-plates and the drawings by Botticelli's hand now preserved at Berlin and in the Vatican, is undeniable, although it is impossible to say how far the painter was responsible for the actual designs.

The history of the Dante drawings which Sandro executed for his old friend and constant patron, Lorenzo di Pier Francesco, is also wrapt in obscurity. All we know is that the volume bears a label with the word Paris, April, 1803, and the name of Giovanni Claudio Molini, a Florentine bookseller who had considerable dealings with English

THE DANTE DRAWINGS

and French collectors. He it was, we may conclude, who brought the precious volume which had laid forgotten in some old Florentine library, to Paris, and sold it to the Duke of Hamilton, by whom it was placed among the treasures of Hamilton Palace, near Glasgow. There it was discovered fifty years ago by Dr. Waagen, who immediately recognized Botticelli's style in the drawings, and declared that these were the Dante illustrations mentioned by Vasari. In 1882, this book, containing eighty-five drawings by Sandro's own hand, was purchased by the Prussian Government at the Hamilton sale, and has now been placed in the Berlin Museum. A folio of admirable facsimile reproductions, with full explanatory text, was published in 1896, by the late Dr. Lippmann, which affords students the opportunity of becoming more closely acquainted with these deeply interesting works.

When this illustrated Dante first came into the Duke of Hamilton's possession, sixteen sheets were found to be wanting. Eight of these, belonging to the early part of the "Inferno" (cantos 2-7, 11, and 14), are still missing; but the other eight (cantos 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, and 16) were fortunately discovered by Dr. Joseph Strzygowski, in the Vatican Library, eighteen years ago. They formed part of the collections of Queen Christina of Sweden, and were bought from her by Pope Alexander VII in 1689. In the quality of the parchment, and in the style of both writing and illustration, these sheets agree exactly with the original volume formerly in Hamilton Palace, and must have been removed from that book during the seventeenth century.

Thus we see that Botticelli's work originally consisted of a hundred drawings, besides the title-page and coloured diagram of Hell, which is now in the Vatican library, among the illustrations described and reproduced by Dr. Strzygowski. All of these were first drawn with a soft silver-point, supposed to contain an alloy of lead, and afterwards roughly traced over with pen and ink. Only three of the series are painted in body-colour; while a fourth, illustrating Canto 10, now in the Vatican, is partly tinted; the figure of Dante being painted red and that of Virgil blue. In all probability Botticelli originally intended the whole series to be coloured in conformity with the usual practice, but gave up the idea owing to the unsatisfactory result of his first experiments in this method. Dr. Strzygowski, indeed, is of opinion

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that the colouring of the four drawings was the work of some miniaturist; but the late Dr. Lippmann,¹ a critic of high authority, expressed his conviction that both drawing and colouring were exclusively Sandro's work, and that no other hand had a share in these illustrations. Many of the drawings are badly damaged and several are partly effaced, while the composition is of very unequal merit. The types and costumes of the figures in many instances bear a marked relation to the work of earlier illustrators who, during the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, had devoted their attention to Dante's great poem and adorned the poems of the "Divina Commedia" with miniatures. Chief among these are the Modena Codex from the Este library, belonging to the latter half of the fourteenth century, and the Altona Codex, which is the work of three Florentine painters who lived early in the fifteenth century. In both of these the method adopted by the artists is the same that we see in Botticelli's manuscript—that is to say, the illustrations are drawn with the pen and lightly coloured with a wash of water-colour. Those of the Altona Codex are especially noteworthy, and include many striking figures in contemporary costume, such as Brunette Latini, Vanni and others. The Centaur Cacus, who is seen in the illustration of the twenty-fifth canto of the "Inferno," is remarkably similar to Sandro's rendering of the same subject, and the drawing of the griffin, leading the car of the Church as described in the twenty-ninth canto, is introduced in both of the earlier works; while in a third Codex of the fifteenth century, now at Naples, the chariot drawn by the griffin, and escorted by the elders, crowned with green wreaths, and angels bearing the seven-branched candlesticks, appears exactly as in Botticelli's illustration.² Another and better known Dante Codex is the MS. from the Urbino collection, which is still preserved in the Vatican Library. This MS. once belonged to Duke Federico, and to judge from the traces of Mantegna and Piero dei Franceschi's influence which the drawings bear, was executed about 1470 or 1480. Here the representations of Roman heroes and classical legends show a considerable knowledge of the antique, while the illustrations of the "Paradiso," which

¹ "Zeichnungen von Sandro Botticelli zu Dante's Göttlichen Komödie." Dr. Franz Lippmann, p. 11.

² "Bildische Darstellungen von Dante," L. Volkmann, p. 24.

THE INFERNO

are generally ascribed to Giulio Clovio, are of a higher order than any of the drawings in the earlier series. But a finer artistic conception of the theme and a more skilful hand was needed to give expression to Dante's creations; and this we find for the first time in the drawings of the Berlin Museum. Both by nature and education Sandro was pre-eminently fitted for the task. His mystic temperament, the powerful attraction which theological subjects evidently had for his mind, led him to take profound interest in the divine poet's work, and the close and attentive study which he had devoted to the great poem, is revealed at every page of his drawings. Now, after the lapse of four centuries, Sandro's illustrations remain the best and most satisfying artistic interpretation of Dante's great epic that has ever been attempted, while they deserve to rank among the finest and most imaginative works of the Renaissance.

The master's hand is plainly visible throughout. We recognize his peculiar type of features; his skill in depicting rapid movement and flying draperies; his love of natural beauty in the delicate drawing of trees and flowers, in the myrtle and orange, the palm and pomegranate, the flowering blossoms and grasses, the slender stems and fluttering roses of his celestial regions. We see his marvellous beauty of design, his supreme mastery of line, alike in the leaping flames and nude forms of the circles of his "Inferno," and in the swaying trees and dancing angels of his "Paradiso." And we see his wonderful powers of expression in the different scenes in which Dante follows every word and gesture of his adored Lady, as she expounds the mysteries of the Christian faith, in the rapt face and yearning eyes of the listening poet, in the radiant smile and uplifted gaze of Beatrice.

The illustrations of the "Inferno," as might be expected, form the least successful portion of the painter's work. The compositions are too often crowded and confused and the introduction of mediaeval imagery is more grotesque than imposing. There is little attempt at dramatic expression, and the painter fails to render the gloom and horror, the fierce passions and mingled emotions, the love and hatred, the anguish and despair, which are so vividly described in the poet's story. But the care with which Sandro follows the text of the poem is evident throughout his work, and gives these illustrations an extra-

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ordinary interest. This close attention to the text of the poem is remarkably shown in the coloured diagram of the "Inferno," which originally formed the frontispiece of the volume, and in which not only the nine different circles of hell, but the principal events of the poet's pilgrimage are introduced. We see the rushing stream of Acheron and the bark of Charon; the naked souls shivering on the brink, and the horned devils, painted red and yellow, who torment unhappy sinners. We see the flaming walls and lofty battlements of the city of Dis, and the blazing sarcophagi where Dante finds Farinata and Pope Anastasius. In his minute and elaborate analysis of this plan, Dr. Strzygowski has even succeeded in identifying many of the chief personages whom the poet meets in these regions. The figures of Homer and the old Greek and Latin poets, of Paolo and Francesca, clasped together as they are borne on the whirlwind; the three-headed Cerberus, the harpies and centaurs, Pluto and Geryon, may all be distinguished. The costume of the two poets is especially noteworthy. Virgil wears a blue robe and deep crimson mantle, with a white collar and a high pointed cap in the form of a mitre, of the same purple colour, trimmed with fur and lined with white. His beard and venerable aspect agree with the description of Virgil teaching in his school in Rome, which is given in the curious mediaeval romance of "Dolopathos," and show how closely Botticelli followed these old traditions. Dante, on the contrary, has no beard, and wears a red cap and mantle over a green robe throughout the series.

In accordance with the practice of many older Giottesque masters, Botticelli has grouped several incidents together in a single subject. The figure of Dante, for instance, appears as many as five times in the first illustration (Canto 1 in the Vatican). We see the poet lost in the depths of a tangled forest,

Chè la diritta via era smarrita,

we watch him emerging from the thicket to climb a hill lighted by the beams of the rising sun, and foiled in his attempt by the successive appearance of the panther, the lion, and the wolf. The different trees of the forest, the pine with its cones, the laurel and orange, are all drawn with exquisite care and delicacy, and the countenance of the poet Virgil,





GIANTS.
Inferno A.VI.

THE INFERNO

the *dolce Duca* who finally comes to Dante's rescue, is singularly noble and expressive. We follow the poets through the circles of the Inferno, and see the torments of the lost and the hideous exultation of the fiends, the centaurs armed with arrows and the harpies darting snakes of fire. The wealth of the painter's imagination finds full scope in the illustration of the eighth and ninth Cantos, where Dante and Virgil are rowed across the waters of the Styx in the bark of Phlegyas to the city of Dis, and the devils, who guard the battlements, forbid the poets to enter. The Furies, crowned and girdled about with snakes, appear on the towers, and a grinning devil holds up the Gorgon head, which Virgil hides with his hands from Dante's sight; while below we see a heavenly messenger flying across the Styx to their help. At his touch the gates fall back and the poets enter the City of Hell, and walk along the narrow path among the flaming graves, where Farinata and Cavalcanti rise from the tomb to greet them. Again, in the thirteenth Canto, he has a subject to his taste in the tangled thorns and briars of the thicket, where suicides expiate their crime, and harpies make their nest among the brambles, while hell-hounds devour the prodigal. The horrors of Malebolge and the lake of the boiling pitch, which reminded Dante of the Arsenal of Venice, where fraudulent money-changers are punished, and horned devils armed with hooks and forks, drive them back into the boiling flood, are depicted with the most vivid realism. But by far the finest drawing of the Inferno is the illustration of Canto XXXI. Here we reach the edge of the lowest circle, where six naked giants, bound in chains, keep guard round the mouth of the yawning gulf. Nimrod, the mighty hunter, blows his horn, and Antaeus, holding Virgil and Dante in his right hand, lowers them down into the nethermost abyss. The composition is full of grandeur and originality, and the admirable foreshortening and modelling of the nude forms recall Sandro's early studies under Antonio Pollaiuolo. Deep down in the lowest circles, we see the traitors fast bound in a frozen sea, Ugolino devouring Archbishop Roger's skull, and Lucifer—a three-headed monster with bat's wings—crushing the arch-traitors, Judas Iscariot, Brutus and Cassius between his teeth.

All of Botticelli's illustrations for the thirty-three Cantos of the "Purgatorio" have been preserved, and on the margin of the first nine

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drawings we read the opening words of each Canto, written with the same pen that traced the figures. "Pechorre miglior aqua" is inscribed at the foot of the first subject, which shows us Virgil and Dante's meeting with Cato of Utica. In the foreground Virgil bathes the poet's face and girds him with reeds, while a troop of blessed souls borne on a bark guided by Angel-bands, to the shore, leap on land, with uplifted hands, chanting "*In Exitu Israel*." For the benefit of the reader Sandro has sketched a diagram of the Mount of Purification, with its different circles, which rise from the sea, as described by Dante, opposite to the city of Jerusalem. Step by step we see the poets climbing the steep mountain-side, and passing through the crowd of souls that wait at the gates of Purgatory. There we see the joyful meeting between Virgil and his countryman Sordello:

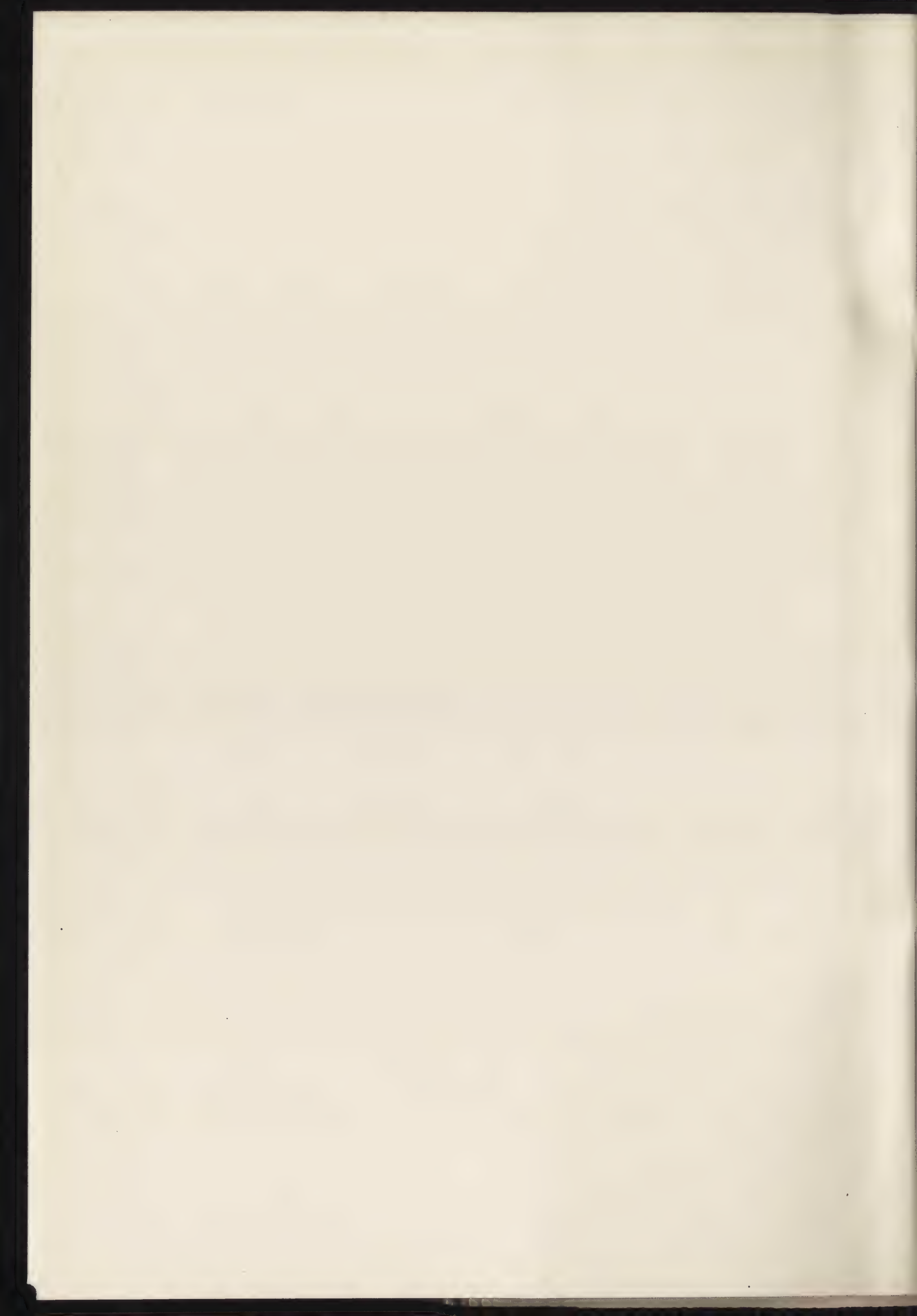
O Mantovano, io son Sordello
Della tua terra. E l'un l'altro abbracciava,

and the eagle that bears Dante, in his sleep, to the gate where the seated angel writes the letter P. with a flaming sword seven times on his brow, in token of the seven deadly sins which are to be expiated in this place. In the tenth drawing Botticelli gives us a representation of the white marble walls of the first circle, adorned with bas-reliefs carved with examples of humility—the Annunciation, King David dancing before the ark while Michal looks on from a window, and the story of Trajan and the widow, as told by Dion Cassius. This last subject, always a favourite story in mediaeval times, occupies a prominent place, and contains a number of carefully drawn figures, to which the master has devoted especial attention, while in the background he has introduced a battle-scene with a mass of serried spears, which strongly resembles Leonardo's famous cartoon of the Battle of Anghiari. In the twelfth drawing we have corresponding examples of the proud receiving the chastisement of their sins, according to the words of the Magnificat: "He hath put down the mighty from their seat."

The *Fall of Lucifer*, the *Flight of the Assyrians*, the *Collapse of the Tower of Babel*, the *Death of Saul*, the *Sorrows of Niobe*, and the *Ruin of Troy* are all lightly sketched out, and as in the *Calumny*, pagan and Christian motives are freely mingled together. The figures of Pallas, Mars, and Apollo are represented standing at the side of Jupiter, who



THE MOUNT.
Purgatorio I.



THE PURGATORIO

contemplates the destruction of the Titans with serene equanimity. In the same drawing we see an angel folding the poet in a tender embrace that recalls the seraphs who welcome Savonarola and his martyred companions in the painting of the *Nativity*, while further on the same angel wipes away a P. from Dante's brow with a touch of his wing.

In the twenty-second Canto Dante and Virgil are joined by Statius, and the three poets are seen standing under the spreading branches of the tree laden with sweet-scented fruit:

Con pomi ad odorar soavi e buoni.

Here Botticelli has, after his wont, drawn every leaf and twig of the tree with the greatest care and delicacy. In the twenty-second Canto it resembles a fir, in the twenty-third the foliage and ripe fruit hanging from the boughs recall the orange-trees in the *Primavera*, and a group of hungry spirits are seen hastening with eager gaze and outstretched hands to reach the fruit of which they may not taste.

Very fine, too, is the illustration of the twenty-seventh canto, with the curling flames leaping up round the poor souls who here do penance for the sins of the flesh, and chant the "*Summae Deus clementiae*" in their pain. We see Dante with folded hands entering the flames at the angel's bidding, and we see him issue from the fiery trial to be crowned with a laurel wreath by the "dolce Duca" at his side.

Per ch' io te sopra te corono e mitrio.

Virgil's task is done; he has led Dante through the fires of hell and purgatory, and henceforth the poet needs his guidance no longer. Lord of himself and master of his passions, he is crowned with the temporal and spiritual crown, the wisdom that is alike human and divine, and his purified soul is rendered meet to enter the courts of heaven, and gaze on the face of Beatrice.

These scenes, full of mystic significance and beauty, were exactly suited to Botticelli's genius, and the painter has made good use of the opportunities afforded him in the closing cantos of the "Purgatorio." He takes us into the heart of the "*divina foresta spessa e viva*," where Matilda, a lovely woman after his favourite type, plucks flowers in the grassy meadow along the banks of the river Eunoë, singing as she goes,

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and shows us the poet standing at her side, with questioning hand, engaged in earnest converse. Suddenly a splendid light breaks over the dark forest, the sound of celestial melodies is heard, and Dante, lifting his head, sees the great vision of Beatrice throned triumphant on the car of the Church. This subject covers the whole of a double sheet, and contains more figures than any other in the book. The chariot is drawn by a winged griffin, the symbol of Christ, and attended by the emblems of the four Evangelists, who walk at the corners of the car. The four cardinal virtues and three Christian graces, in the form of fair maidens wreathed with garlands of flowers, and clad in puffed and flying draperies, like the angels of the *Coronation*, dance with light footsteps and swaying arms on either side. Seven angels, bearing lighted candlesticks with long columns of smoke streaming across the heavens, and four-and-twenty elders, holding the open book of the Old Testament, as described in Landino's commentary, stand on the opposite side, facing the heavenly chariot. Two aged men, St. Paul and St. Luke, as the writers of the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, accompanied by the four Fathers of the Church, walk behind the car, and last of all the venerable figure of St. John the Evangelist, the seer of Patmos, with head sunk in slumber on his clasped hands, brings up the rear. Beatrice herself, veiled in white and crowned with olive, is seated on the chariot, attended by angels who scatter roses in the air while the elders chant "*Veni Sponsa de Libano*," and Dante, bereft of his "*dolce Duca*," stands sadly on the shores of the stream, overwhelmed by the power of the old love, and the consciousness of his own unworthiness. All of these different motives are united in one magnificent picture, on which Botticelli has lavished his highest powers and rarest skill, and has marvellously succeeded in realizing the divine poet's vision.

In the next drawing we see Beatrice gently dipping Dante in the cleansing waters of Lethe, after which the four Virtues, dancing as they go, lead them to Christ, and the three Christian Graces sing beside his lady's car. Last of all, in the thirty-third drawing, Beatrice appears seated at the foot of the tree, with an expression of deep sadness on her beautiful features, while the seven maidens chant the seventy-eighth Psalm: "*Deus, venerunt gentes, polluerunt templum sanctum tuum*," "Thy holy temple have they defiled and made Jerusalem an heap of



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THE CAR OF THE CHURCH.
Purgatorio XXV.







DANTE AND BEATRICE FLYING UPWARDS.
Paradiso I.

THE PARADISO

stones." Then Dante, at her bidding, is led by Matilda to drink of the healing stream, and, strengthened by the draught of holy water, feels his powers of body and soul renewed and ready to enter Paradise:

Puro e disposto a salire alle stelle.

This last subject is one of the finest in the whole series. The foliage of the different trees in the forest is drawn with exquisite care and taste. As many as seven or eight different species may be distinguished, the palm, orange, citron, medlar and pomegranate are all clearly seen, while the wailing figures, standing on the banks of the river with bowed heads and yearning eyes, as they weep over the errors of the Church and the evil lives of Christians, are infinitely pathetic.

In the illustrations of the "Paradiso" we notice a change in Botticelli's method of treatment. Instead of crowding his drawings with figures, and introducing a number of different incidents into the same subject, he confines himself almost exclusively to the two chief personages of the poet's epic, Dante and Beatrice, whom he represents, as a rule, by themselves, or else attended by a single angel or blessed spirit, who converses with them. The figures are drawn on a larger scale than in the "Inferno" or "Purgatorio," and the actual pen-work is as simple as the motive of the picture. Very few strokes are employed, but the effect produced is singularly fine and decorative. This time we have no plan or diagram, as was the case both in the "Inferno" and "Purgatorio." The celestial regions, the painter feels, are beyond the reach of human understanding. All he can show us are the forms of Dante and Beatrice, crowned with bay-leaves, borne upwards by the power of love to the heavenly realm. The conception is as original as the execution is delicate and beautiful. Leaving the flowery meads and winding stream far below, Beatrice floats through the air, drawing Dante after her. Together they soar upwards through the wind-bent trees of the forest, with eyes fixed on the opening heavens, in an ecstasy of love and yearning. The subsequent history of their journey through the ten heavens of the poet's system, as expounded by Beatrice in Canto II is now set forth. We see Dante and his guide in the successive spheres of the seven planets, and Beatrice, growing ever fairer and more radiant as she soars higher into the empyrean, explains

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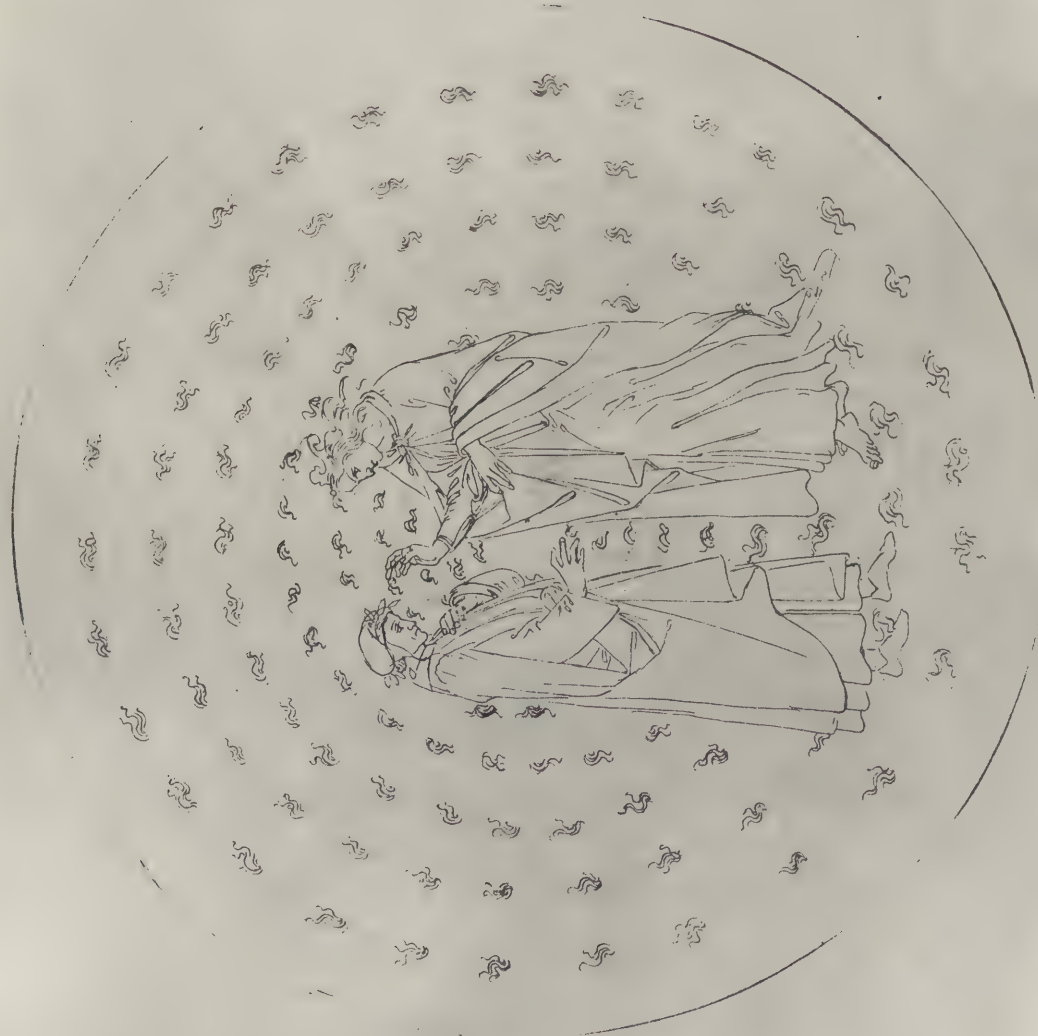
the mysteries of God to her listening companion and clears away his doubts.

Quivi la Donna mia vid' io sì lieta
Come nel lume di quel ciel sì mise,
Che più lucente se ne fè il pianeta.

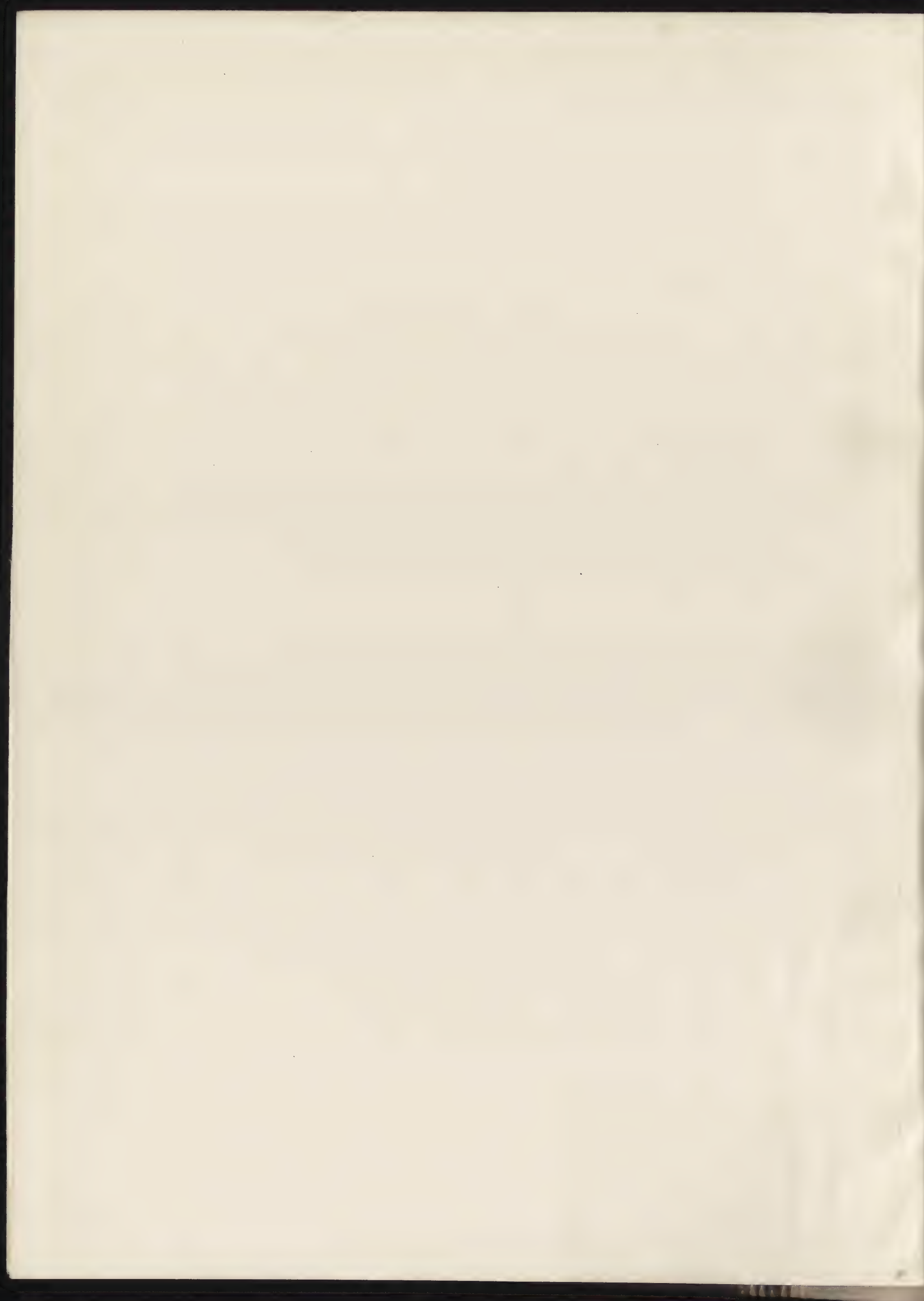
Often as the same motive and figures are repeated, there is no monotony in Sandro's conception. The variety of attitude and expression is unending. Sometimes Dante and Beatrice walk rapidly side by side, sometimes she stands before him with uplifted hand, discoursing eloquently of heavenly things. Sometimes the poet turns to Beatrice with a doubtful and anxious gaze, at other times his expression is transfigured by the brightness of her countenance, and his eyes are fixed ardently upon his lady's face. Sometimes they stand apart, and Beatrice is seen floating in the air, while Dante's eyes are bent on the ground in deep and earnest contemplation. The figures may be ill-drawn and out of proportion, the foreshortening and perspective may often be at fault, but the beauty of the conception, the grace and charm of the faces, are irresistible.

In the third Canto, the circle of the moon, we see the poet's meeting with the fair women, who turn their faces all towards him as if eager to speak, and Beatrice, throwing one arm round Dante, tells him that these are not shadows, but realities, upon which the poet salutes Piccarda. In the sixth, Dante and Beatrice stand in the circle of Mercury, surrounded by a host of blessed spirits, "each shining with new splendour," whom the painter shows us under the figure of tiny sparks of flame. In the fourteenth Canto the figures of the poet and his mistress are repeated twice over; in the fifteenth he addresses his ancestor, Cacciaguida, and in the next illustration we see Beatrice step apart with a smile on her face—the smile which Dante tells us, recalled the cough of the maiden who warned Guinevere of her danger (Par. xvi, 15). Again the painter represents Beatrice addressing Dante with a smile when they rise into the sphere of Jupiter, and she bids him look about him and see the blessed company of spirits who hover around the form of an eagle:

Volgiti e ascolta
Chè non pur ne' miei occhi è paradiso.



DANTE AND BEATRICE IN MERCURY.
Paradiso VII.



THE PARADISO

"Turn round and listen, for paradise is not only to be found in my eyes." The poet's flight to the sphere of the fixed stars is the subject of the twenty-first drawing, where he is borne in the arms of Beatrice up the ladder which reaches into the eighth heaven. There we see him and his mistress again, surrounded by thousands of spirits in the form of flames, while the signs of the Heavenly Twins and the Bull appear at their feet, and the Sun of Christ occupies the centre of the picture. In the twenty-sixth drawing the names of the Apostles, "Piero, Giovanni, and Jacopo," are inscribed on the three flames which, hovering above the head of Dante, circle round the Sun, and we see Beatrice hiding the poet's eyes from the dazzling rays which blind him. In the next drawing, he looks back at the long distance that he has travelled, and sees the earth, dimly lighted by the rays of the sun, lying far below, while in the upper part of the same sheet he is represented soaring at Beatrice's side, attended by a flight of happy souls, into the highest heaven.

Many of these later drawings seem to have been only lightly sketched in, and several of the figures are half-effaced. But the illustration of the twenty-eighth Canto is a splendid and elaborate composition, with countless figures, all carefully drawn and shaded. The painter, old and failing as he was, when he reached the last pages of Dante's poem, put forth all his powers to set forth the great vision which he had often heard Savonarola describe in impassioned language. All the grace and beauty of his art, all the mystic poetry of his soul, are present in this picture of the celestial city. We see the nine orders of Angels, who stand before God and chant their eternal song of praise as they circle round the throne. On the margin of the sheet of parchment, written with the painter's own pen, we read the first letters of the names of these celestial hierarchies, as described in Beatrice's own words:

Cherub	Cherubini	Podest	Podestadi
Serafi	Serafini	Princip	Principati
Tron	Troni	Arch	Archangeli
Domin	Dominazioni	Ang	Angeli
Virtut	Virtutes		

These names, first given, as Dante tells us, to the different ranks

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of angelic beings, by Dionysius the Areopagite, are the self-same terms, used by our own poet Milton. "Thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, powers."¹ But the symbols borne by each order were, as Dr. Lippmann has pointed out, evidently borrowed from Dante's own book of the "Convito" (ii, 6), which Botticelli must have studied as attentively as he did the "Divina Commedia."² Thus the three highest orders of angels bear rings, flags, and shields in their hands, symbolic of the Almighty power of God, and the next ranks hold sceptres and globes, as types of the Kingship of Christ over the earth. The fourth row are represented, either looking upwards in an ecstasy of adoring love, or else hiding their eyes from the splendour of the vision, while the lower ranks, who are described in the "Convito" as symbolizing the gifts of the Spirit, bear scrolls and tablets in their hands.

In the centre of the heavenly host Dante stands with upraised hands and gazes, lost in adoring rapture, on the great vision, while Beatrice, at his side, points with triumphant gesture to the Throne of God. On the left, in the lowest tier of angels, one little cherub holds a *cartellino* in his hand, on which the painter has inscribed his own name—"Sandro di Mariano." In these words, written in the same minute characters as the lines from Dante's poem which are inscribed on the margin of his drawings, we see an expression of Botticelli's pious hope that his soul might at the last be numbered among the elect and share the bliss of heaven.

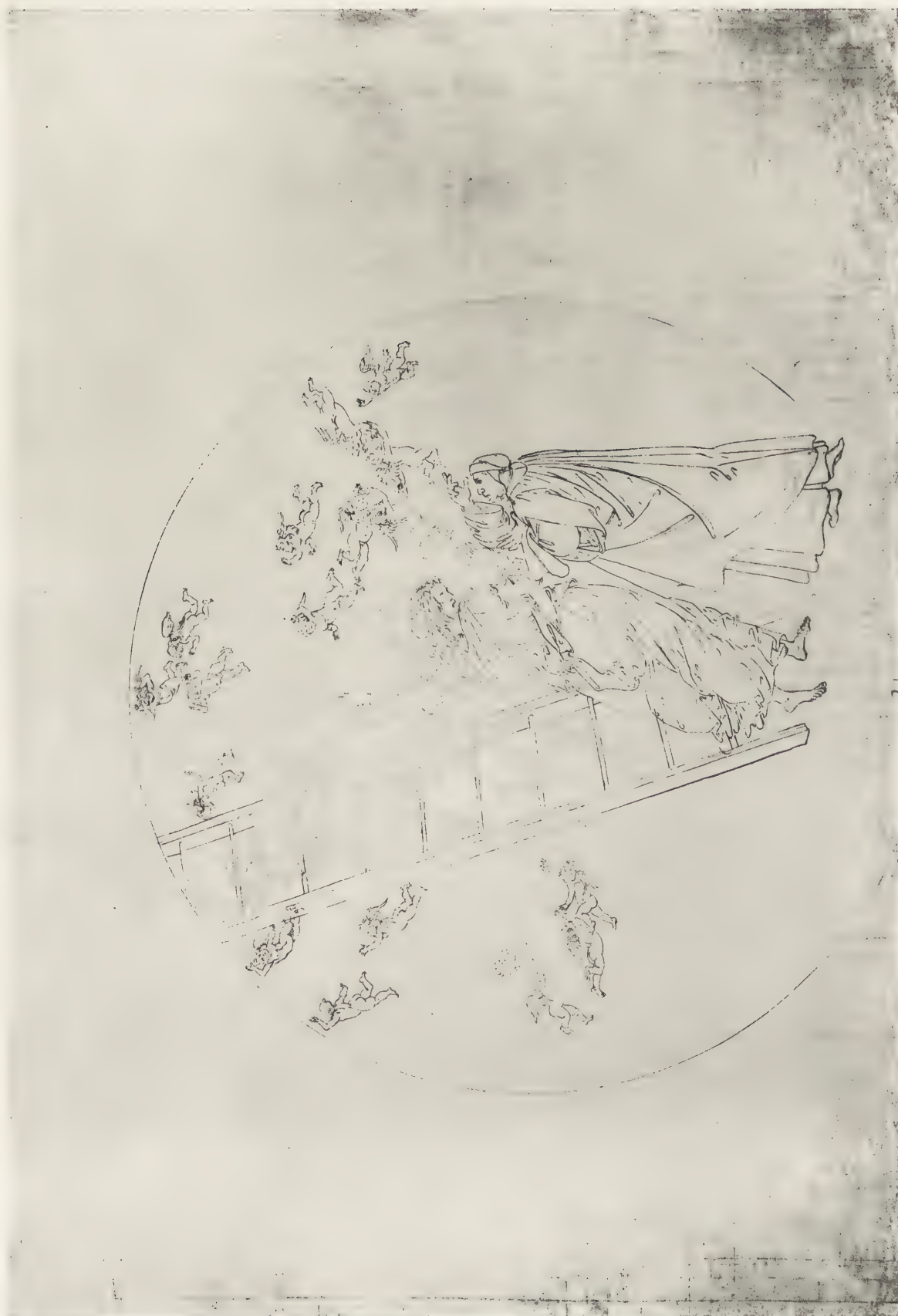
In the next drawing Beatrice appears again among the angel choirs circling round the Light of God, resplendent in youth and loveliness. Her tall stature and royal bearing, her rippling locks and radiant smile strongly recall that other form of *Primavera* which Sandro painted long ago, in the brilliant days of the Magnifico's reign, and which now came back to him as he "dreamt of the regions of eternal spring."

In questa primavera sempiterna.

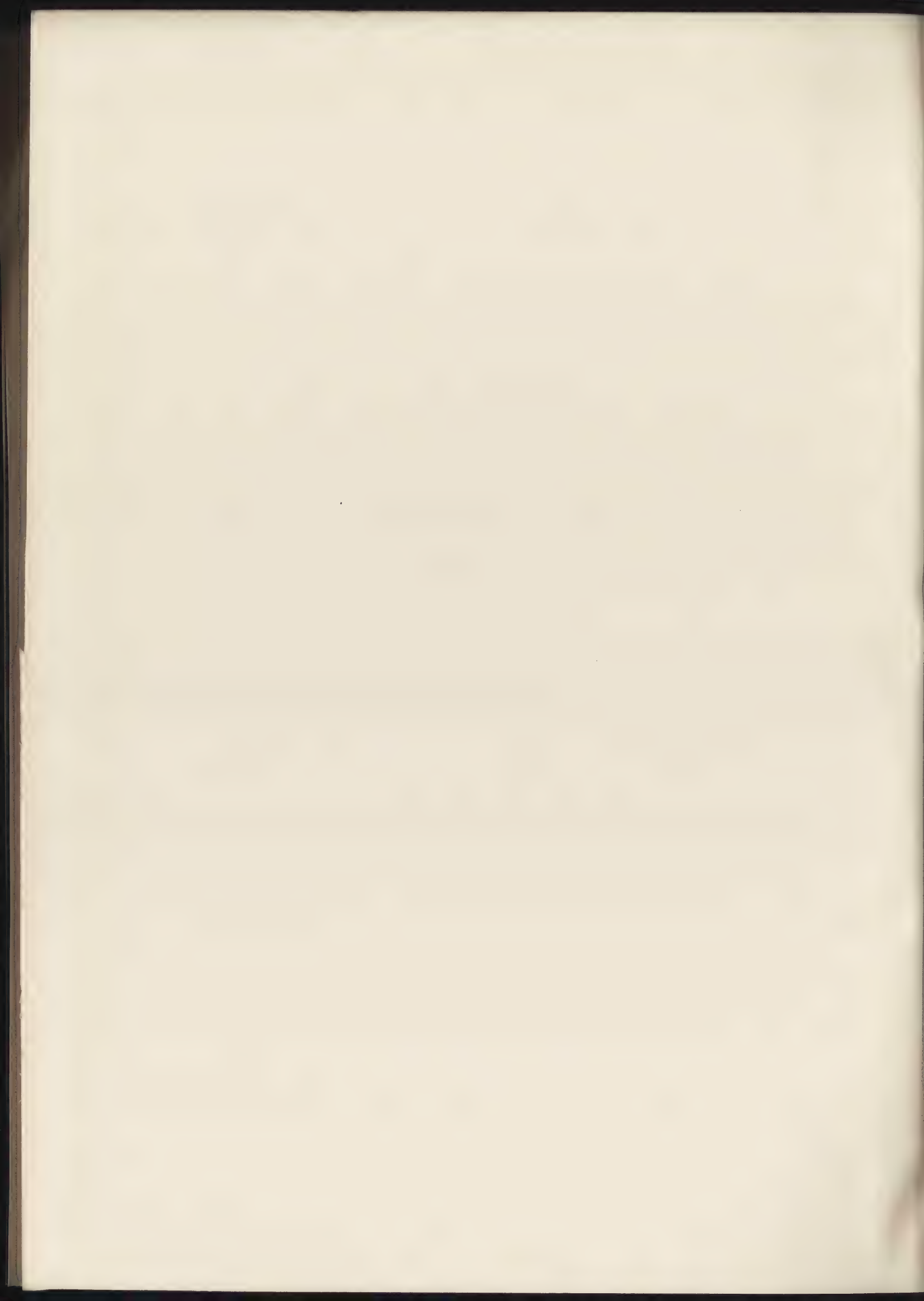
Once more we see Dante at his lady's side, in the highest empyrean, looking down at the crystal river flowing at his feet, with the strange and beautiful blossoms of everlasting spring flowering along its banks and the "living sparks"—"*faville vive*"—whom

¹ "Paradise Lost," v. 9.

² D. Lippmann, *op. cit.*, p. 53.



DANTE AND BEATRICE AT THE FOOT OF THE LADDER.
Paradiso X.VI.



LAST YEARS

Sandro represents in the form of winged *genii* hovering in the air and settling on the bells of the acanthus-shaped flowers, or else diving down into the shining waters.

The next sheet has been left blank, and there is no illustration to the thirty-first Canto. Only the Rose of heaven, which Dante describes in the last songs of his "Paradiso," is sketched out in the drawing for the thirty-second Canto, and the figures of Christ and his Mother are slightly indicated as throned on the highest point, while the Archangel Gabriel, "the morning star, whose face brightens as he gazes on the Sun," is seen with outspread wings, chanting that perpetual hymn with which the Courts of Heaven resound, "*Ave Maria, gratia plena.*"

Here the great series ends. The two remaining leaves are left blank, as if the pen had dropped from the master's hand before the work was complete. Lorenzo di Pier Francesco dei Medici, the patron for whom Sandro's volume was originally executed, died in 1503, probably before the drawings were finished, but in all likelihood the master went on with the work for some years after his old friend's death. This, however, is only conjecture, for we have no certain record of the great painter's last years. All we know is that he was still held in high honour by his fellow-citizens.

On the 25th of January, 1504, Botticelli, we find, was among the chief artists in Florence who were summoned by the Operai del Duomo, to choose a site for the young Michelangelo's colossal statue of David.¹ Many of Sandro's old friends and associates were present on the memorable occasion when this illustrious company met in the hall of the Opera del Duomo and held a solemn council. Leonardo was there, after his long absence from Florence, and the favourite architect of the Medici, Giuliano di San Gallo, together with his brother Antonio, and Simone Cronaca, the Piagnone architect who built the new hall for the Consiglio Grande. Baccio d'Agnolo, the Piagnone sculptor, was there with Giovanni delle Corniole, the engraver who carved Savonarola's head on a well-known gem, and the fine old master, Andrea della Robbia, whose family was so closely associated with San Marco in the days of the revival, and who was already in his seventieth year. There, too,

¹ Gaye, "Carteggio," ii, 454.

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were Perugino and Cosimo Rosselli, the painters who had worked with Botticelli in the Pope's chapel; Piero di Cosimo, the clever foreman of Rosselli's shop, who had already surpassed his master; Ghirlandajo's follower, Granacci; and Sandro's own pupils, Biagio Tucci and Filippino Lippi, then at the height of his fame, but whose career was to be brought to a sudden and premature close only three months later. Sandro himself took part in the discussion which followed and supported the suggestion first made by Francesco Monciatto, a wood-carver, and seconded by Cosimo Rosselli, that the colossal statue should stand in front of the Duomo, as had been the original intention of the Operai who gave Michelangelo the commission. "When Cosimo had done speaking, Sandro," we learn, "spoke as follows: 'Cosimo has said where in my opinion the statue ought to be placed, in order that it may be seen by the passers-by, either at the side of Judith, on the steps of Santa Maria del Fiore, or else in the Loggia dei Signori, but rather, I think, at the corner of the church, and this I judge to be the best place.'"

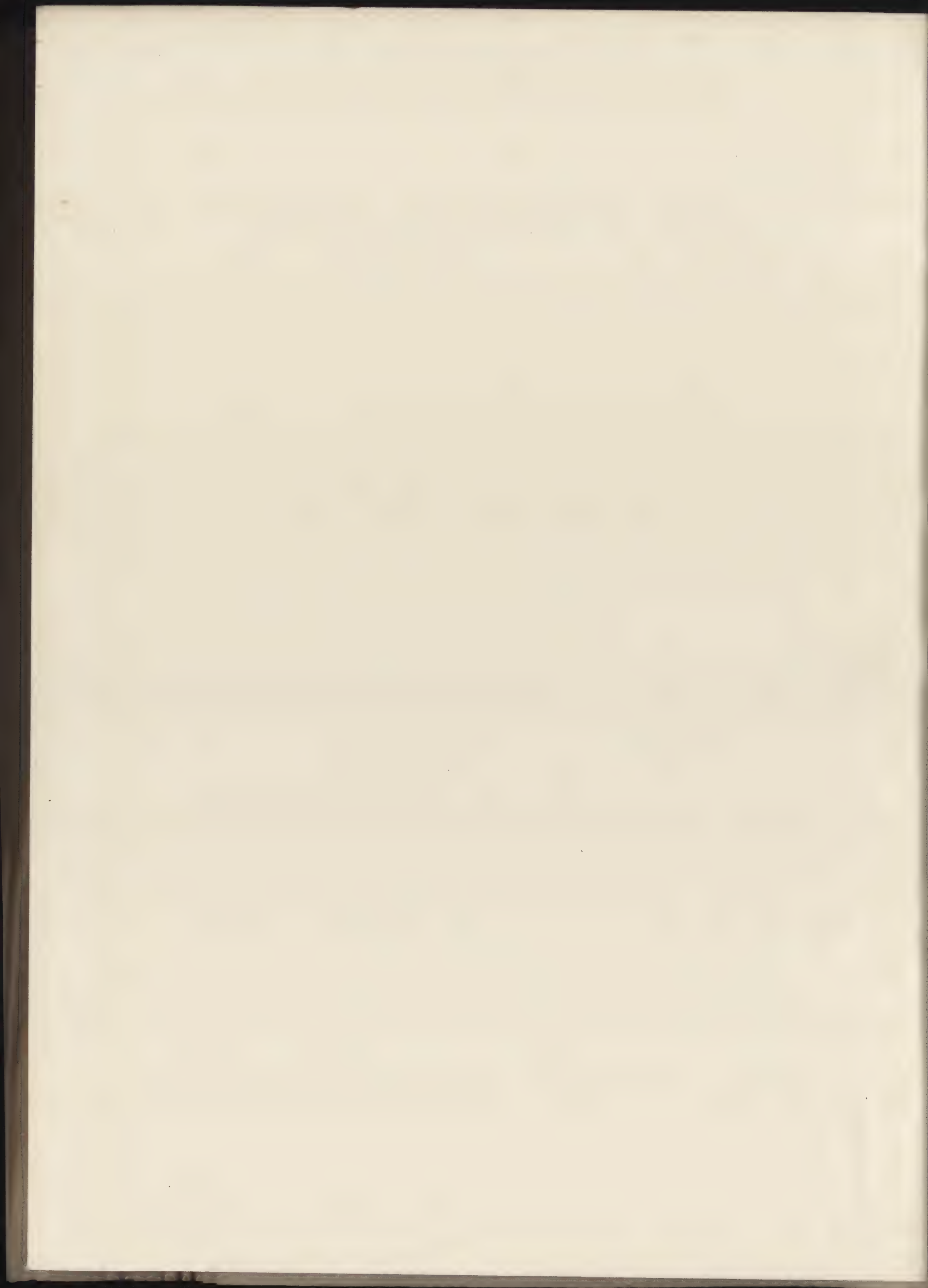
Giuliano di San Gallo, however, demurred to this proposal, fearing that exposure to air would injure the marble, and suggested that the statue should stand under the Loggia. Upon this Messer Angelo di Lorenzo Manfredi, one of the heralds, objected, saying that the statue might interfere with certain ceremonies that were held in the Loggia during public festivities. Leonardo da Vinci, on the other hand, strongly supported San Gallo, and could not see that the giant's presence need injure the public ceremonies. Filippino and Piero di Cosimo then proposed that the choice of the site should be left to Michelangelo himself, "as he will know better than anyone else, how it should be." In the end, this last resolution was carried unanimously, and by Michelangelo's wish, the great statue was set upon the steps of the Palazzo, to the right of the entrance.

This, as far as we know, was the last public appearance of Sandro Botticelli. After that we hear no more of him. All we have is Vasari's melancholy picture of the old painter in his declining years, infirm and helpless, unable to stand upright, and supporting his tottering frame with two crutches. At length death came to his release. He died on the 17th of May, 1510, at the age of sixty-four, and was buried with his



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THE ANGELIC HOST.
Paradise XVIIII.



THE END

fathers in the family vault of Ognissanti, his parish church, near the spot where Simonetta Vespucci had been laid five-and-thirty years before.

Although he can hardly be said to have reached an advanced age at the time of his death, Botticelli had outlived most of his contemporaries and several of his scholars. Ghirlandajo, Cosimo Rosselli, the Pollaiuoli brothers, Filippino, were all dead. And he had lived long enough to see the decline of his own reputation. The great popularity which he had enjoyed during the last decades of the fifteenth century was already on the wane. In spite of the faithfulness with which Sandro's art reflected contemporary thought and feeling, and of the fascination which it had for the scholars of his age, it was in many respects out of harmony with the prevailing tendencies of Florentine painting in his generation. The finest qualities of his work, its beauty of line and charm of expression, were the direct inheritance of an earlier age, and had little in common with the new ideals and aims of Cinquecento masters. The passion to emulate the grand style of Michelangelo, which swept with overwhelming force over Florentine art in the first years of the new century, helped to wipe out the memory of the past and sealed the doom of the old Gothic tradition. Before long Botticelli's fame had died away and his very name was forgotten.

A curious proof of the oblivion into which his art had sunk, is to be found in the decree that was issued in 1598, by the Grand Duke Ferdinand I, a direct descendant of Sandro's old patron, Lorenzo di Pier Francesco. By this decree, Florentine citizens were forbidden to remove any works of art, by the hand of prominent masters, from the churches or houses of the city, or even to take them to their villas and country seats in the neighbourhood. In the list of excellent painters which follows, Botticelli's name is not even mentioned. Only two masters who flourished in the fifteenth century, Perugino and Filippino, are included in the list, while no less than seventeen painters of the Cinquecento are named. Among these we find not only the great masters, Michelangelo, Raphael, Leonardo, Fra Bartolommeo, Titian, Correggio and Sebastiano del Piombo, but many distinctly secondary artists, such as Beccafumi, Franciabigio, Perino del Vaga, Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino. So quickly do fashions in art change and pass away, so surely and com-

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pletely does the march of Time obliterate the memory of men that were famous and honoured in their lifetime. During the next three hundred years Botticelli's name remained buried in forgetfulness, and it was only towards the close of the nineteenth century that the rare genius and high artistic qualities of this great master were once more fully recognized and appreciated.

THE CHIEF WORKS OF SANDRO BOTTICELLI

FLORENCE

ACCADEMIA DELLE BELLE ARTI

- 73. *The Coronation of the Virgin, with Saints and Angels*, from the Church of San Marco. Painted on wood.
- 74. *Predella to the Coronation*. Five subjects: the Annunciation, Scenes from the lives of St. Augustine, St. John, St. Jerome, and St. Eligius. Painted on wood.
- 80. *Spring in the Garden of Venus*. Painted on wood. From the Medici Villa of Castello.
- 85. *Madonna, Angels and Saints*, from the Church of S. Barnabà. Painted on wood.
- 157, 158, 161, 162. *Predella panels. Christ rising from the Dead. The Death of St. Ambrose, St. Augustine and the Child, and Salome with the Baptist's Head*. Painted on wood.

UFFIZI GALLERY

- 39. *The Birth of Venus*, from the Medici Villa at Castello. Painted on canvas.
- 1154. *Portrait of Giovanni dei Medici*. Painted on wood.
- 1156. *The Return of Judith*. Painted on wood.
- 1158. *Holofernes lying dead in his Tent*. Painted on wood.
- 1179. *Saint Augustine in his Cell*. Painted on wood.
- 1182. *The Allegory of Calumny*. Painted on wood.
- 1267 bis. *The Madonna of the Magnificat. Tondo*, painted on wood.
- 1286. *The Adoration of the Magi*, from the Church of Santa Maria Novella. Painted on wood.
- 1289. *The Madonna of the Pomegranate. Tondo*, painted on wood.
- 1299. *La Fortezza*. Painted on wood.
- 3436. *The Adoration of the Magi, or Christ adored as King by the Signoria of Florence* (partly by Botticelli). Painted on wood.

PALAZZO PITTI

- Pallas subduing a Centaur*. Painted on canvas.

SANDRO BOTTICELLI

MARCHESE FARINOLA

The Last Communion of St. Jerome. Painted on wood.

OGNISSANTI

St. Augustine. Painted in fresco.

ROME

CAPPELLA SISTINA, VATICAN

Three frescoes: (1) *The Temptation of Christ and the Purification of a Leper.*

(2) *Scenes from the Life of Moses.*

(3) *The Destruction of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.*

Portraits of the Popes. Painted in fresco.

BERGAMO

MORELLI GALLERY

84. *The Story of Virginia.* Painted on wood.

MILAN

AMBROSIANA

145. *Madonna and Child, with Angels.* Tondo, painted on wood.

POLDI-PEZZOLI MUSEUM

156. *Madonna and Child.* Painted on wood.

BERLIN

MUSEUM

106. *Madonna, with St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist.*
Painted on wood; from the Church of San Spirito, Florence (1485).

1128. *St. Sebastian;* from the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, Florence.
Painted on wood (1473).

DRESDEN

GALLERY

12. *Scenes from the Life of St. Zenobius.* Painted on wood.

HIS CHIEF WORKS

LONDON

NATIONAL GALLERY

- 592. *The Adoration of the Magi*. Painted on wood.
- 626. *Portrait of a Youth*. Painted on wood.
- 915. *Mars and Venus*. Painted on wood.
- 1033. *The Adoration of the Magi*. Tondo, painted on wood.
- 1034. *The Nativity* (1500). Painted on wood.

MR. J. P. HESELTINE

Madonna and Child with St. John (partly by Botticelli). Painted on wood.

MR. LUDWIG MOND

Scenes from the Life of St. Zenobius. Painted on wood.

PARIS

THE LOUVRE

- 1297. *Giovanna degli Albizzi and the Three Graces*. Painted in fresco.
- 1298. *Lorenzo Tornabuoni and the Seven Liberal Arts*. Painted in fresco (1486).

ST. PETERSBURG

HERMITAGE

- 163. *The Adoration of the Magi*. Painted on wood.

BOSTON, U.S.A.

MRS. J. L. GARDNER

Madonna and Child, with Angel (the Chigi Madonna). Painted on wood.

The Death of Lucretia. Painted on wood.

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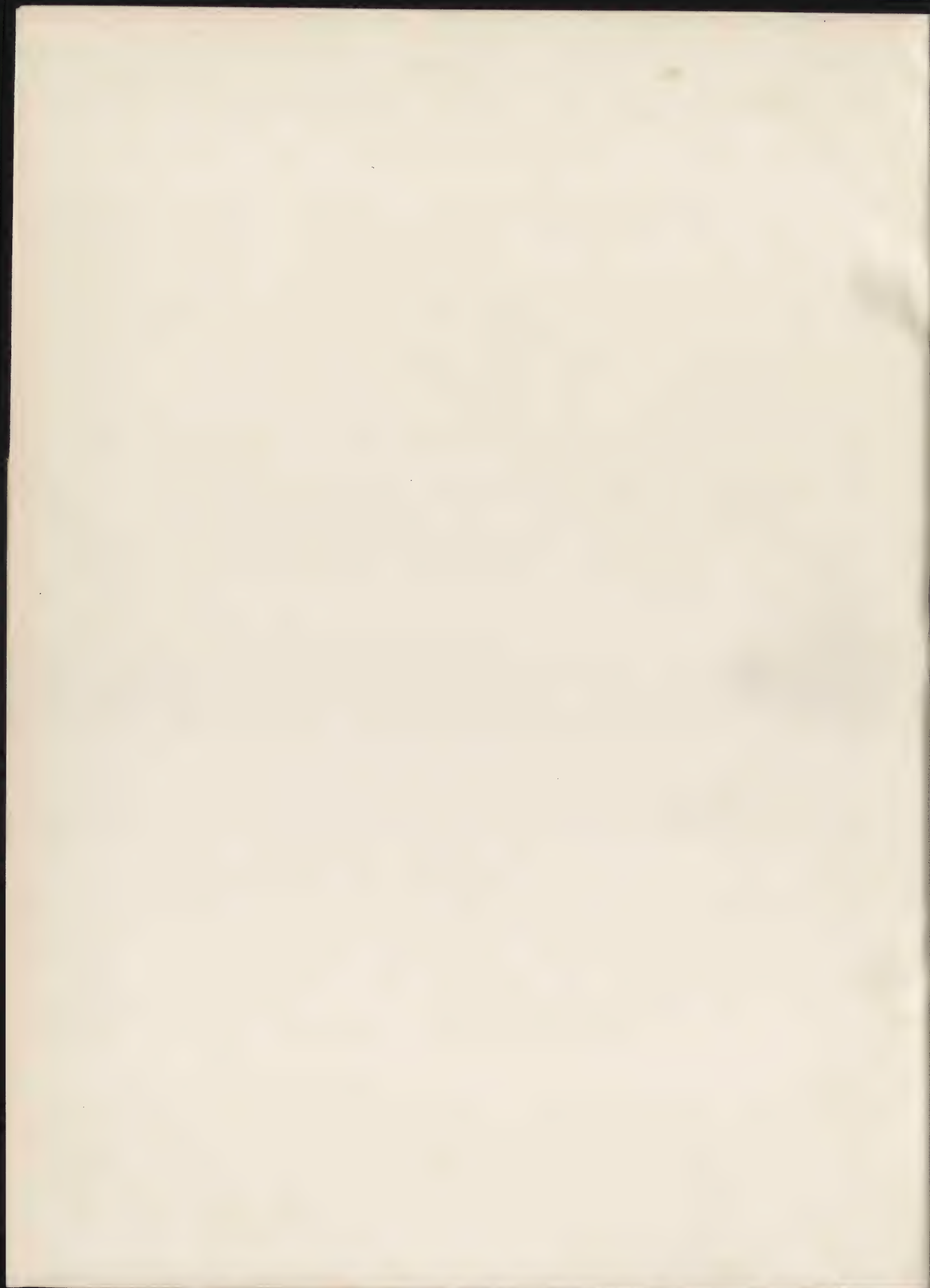
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